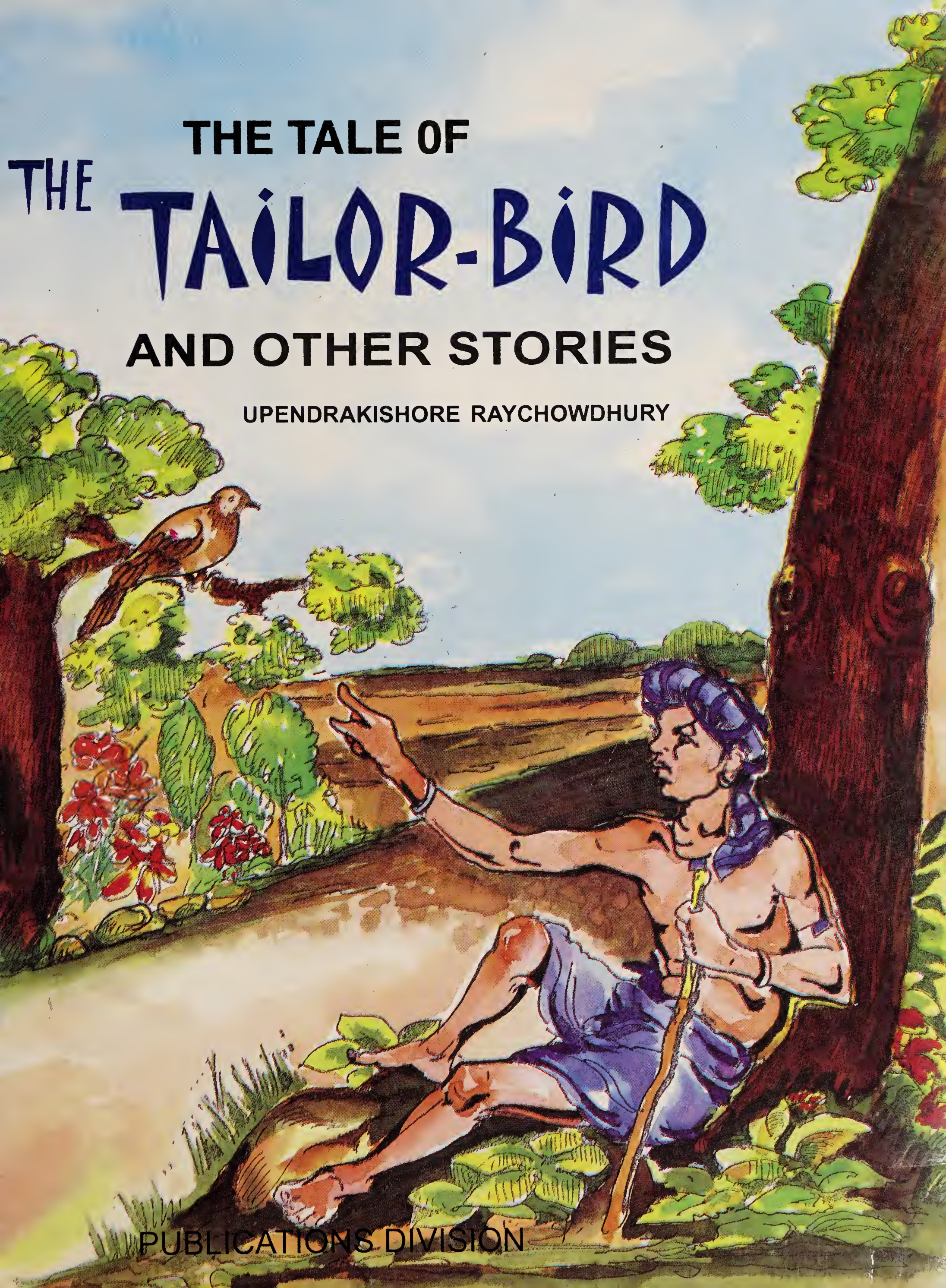



THE TALE OF THE TAILOR-BIRD AND OTHER STORIES

UPENDRAKISHORE RAYCHOWDHURY



PUBLICATIONS DIVISION



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UPENDRAKISHORE RAYCHOWDHURY

Translated from Bengali

By

CHAMELI BOSE



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THE TALE OF THE TAILOR-BIRD

THERE was a brinjal-tree behind the cottage of a house-holder. The teeny-weeny tailor-bird, Tuntuni, had woven a neat little nest, bringing together the leaves of that brinjal-tree with the help of her tiny little beak. There were three little birdies in the nest. They were very, very small. They could not flap their wings, they could not even open their eyes. They could only open their mouths and cry feebly.

The pet cat of that cottage was very, very naughty. The only thought she had in her mind was to devour the little birdies by any means. One day, she came under the brinjal -tree and said, "Hullo, Tuntuni! What are you doing?" Bowing down her head to the branch of the tree Tuntuni said, "I pay thee my respects, Your Royal Highness!" Being addressed in such a manner the cat was beside herself with joy and went back. She thus came day after day, Tuntuni paid her respects and addressed her as 'Great Queen' day after day, and the cat being pleased went away.

When the birdies grew up, they had beautiful full-grown wings and they no longer kept their eyes shut. Tuntuni asked them, "Will you be able to fly, dear ones?" The birdies said, "Yes, mummy, yes." Tuntuni said, "Then just see if you can manage to fly and sit on the top of the palmyra tree." The birdies flew at ease and set their feet on the top of the palmyra tree. Delighted, Tuntuni said, "Now let that wicked cat come here again, I'll see."

After a short while the cat appeared and said, "Hey, Tuntuni! What are you doing?" Tuntuni stretched out her leg as if to kick and shouted out, "Be off, you wicked cat" and then—whish—she flew away. The naughty cat showed her teeth in anger and jumped up on the tree; but, alas! She could neither get at Tuntuni nor could she enjoy a feast of the birdies.

Prick! Prick! Prick! She was pricked by the thorns of the brinjal-tree, ran down in panic and with a burning sensation all over her body, went back home, crest-fallen.

THE KING AND THE TAILOR-BIRD

THE tailor-bird had made her nest at a corner in the king's garden. The coins in the king's chest had been left to dry in the sun. At the close of the day, the king's men forgot to take back one coin and it was left behind. Tuntuni caught sight of the glittering object and put it in her nest. She thought, "Hooey! How rich am I! I have the same treasure in my nest as the king has in his palace."

From then onwards, she brooded over the same thought and said,

"I possess in my nest with pleasure,
The mighty king's bright treasure."

Hearing the twittering of the bird from his court the king said, "What is the bird saying?" His men with folded hands said, "Your Majesty! The bird is saying that it has the same treasure in her nest as you have in your palace." The king burst into laughter and said, "Go and see what she has in her nest." Coming back they reported, "Your Majesty! There is a rupee in her nest." The king said, "That belongs to me, bring it back." Immediately the king's men fetched it from the bird's nest. Poor little thing! She could do nothing. In deep sorrow she kept on saying,

"The king is a miserly person,
Takes away Tuni's mite, O listen!"

The king heard this and smiled. He said, "That bird is surely a stiff-necked one. Go and return her the coin." Tuni was delighted to get back the coin. She said,

"What a fright the king said!
Tuni's money was sent back!"

The king asked, "What is she saying again?" His men replied, "She says, the king is frightened, and that is why he has returned the coin." Hearing this the king became furious, he said, "What audacity! Seize her. I will fry her and eat her up." No sooner had the king said this than his men rushed out, caught hold of her and brought her to the king. With the poor bird clutched in his palm he went into the inner apartment and said to the queens, "You will have to fry this bird and serve me at lunch-time." Saying this the king went away and the queens began to scrutinise her. One of them said, "What a lovely bird! Please give it to me." She took the bird in her hand. Another queen had it from her hand, when the third one was about to take her in her hand, Tuni slipped and made good her escape.

What a catastrophe, indeed! What to do now? If it comes to the king's knowledge he will raise hell ! When the queens were in such a helpless position

they saw a frog moving about—hoppity, hoppity, hop!! The seven queens saw it and caught hold of it. They said, “Ssh! Ssh! Not a word! It must be kept a secret. Let us fry this frog for the king. He will think that he has eaten the bird.” They peeled the frog, fried it and served it to the king. He was very pleased to eat it. After that, just when he had taken his seat in the royal court and was thinking, “The bird has been rightly served!” Tuni cried out,

“What a fun! what a fun!

The king ate a frog, a fried one!”

Hearing this the king sprang up. He spat. He retched. He washed his mouth and what else didn’t he do? Then he said in a rage, “Cut off the noses of the seven queens.” The executioner promptly carried out his order, Tuntuni sang,

“Only because a Tuni twittered

Seven queens had their noses severed.”



The king said, “Seize that rouge! This time I am going to swallow her. Let me see how she escapes!” Tuntuni was brought to him. He said, “Bring water.” Water being given, the king took a mouthful of it. He put Tuni into his mouth and shutting his eyes, gobbled her up. Everybody commented, “Now Tuni has been

rightly served!” The words had barely left their lips when the king belched. All the people in the court were surprised to see that Tuni came out of the king’s mouth and flew away like an arrow. The king cried out, “She’s gone! She’s gone! Why don’t you catch her?” Then and there people ran after her and caught her again; a soldier stood all attention before the king with a sword in his hand; as soon as Tuni would come out she would be chopped off.

The king swallowed Tuni again and covered his mouth tightly with both his hand lest the bird should fly out. The poor bird turned over and over in his belly restlessly. After a while the king could not help retching and out came all the contents of his belly along with the little tailor-bird. All shouted out, “O soldier! Kill her, quick! Ah, she escapes!” The soldier was puzzled; as he brought down his sword to kill the bird, it chopped off the king’s nose while the bird flew away. The king shouted at the top of his voice, along with him all the people in the court clamoured. Then the doctor came, bandaged his nose and spared no pains to save him from death. Seeing all this, Tuntuni went on saying,

“With your nose cut off, O poor king!

Aren’t you rightly served? – just think!”

Then she flew away to another land. The king’s men rushed to her nest only to find it dark and deserted.

NARAHARI DAS

A Young goat used to live in the cave of a large mountain. The mountain was by the side of a forest adjacent to a meadow. He was still very young. So he was not allowed to go out of the cave. Whenever he wanted to go out his mother would say, "Don't you go out. The bear will catch hold of you, the tiger will take you away, the lion will gobble you up." He was terribly frightened, so he sat quietly in the cave. As he grew up, his fear subsided and he would peep out of the cave as soon as his mother went out. At last, one day, he strolled out the cave.

There a huge ox was having a feast of fresh green grass. The kid had never before seen such a big animal. But looking at his horn he took him for a big goat and thought that he had grown so big because he took nutritious food. So he went to the ox and asked him, "What do you have for your food? May I ask?" The ox said, "I eat grass." The kid said, "My mother too take grass but she hasn't grown so big as you." The ox said, "I eat a far superior type of grass and I eat a lot more than your mother." The kid said, "Where do you get that type of grass?" The ox said, "In the interior part of the forest. The kid said, "Won't you take me there?" Hearing this the ox led him on.

There was beautiful grass in the forest. The kid ate to his heart's content. His belly was overloaded, he was unable to move. At the close of the day the ox said, "Let us go home now." The kid was in fix. He was unable to move. How could he go back home? So he said, "You go back, I shall go tomorrow." Then the ox went away. The kid caught sight of a hole nearby and entered into it.

The burrow belonged to a fox. He had gone to have feast in the house of his maternal uncle, a tiger. Returning home very late at night he found that some strange animal had occupied his burrow. The kid was of dark colour, so the fox could not have a clear view of him. His heart thumping with fear, he said, "Who's there in my burrow?" The kid had a great presence of mind. He said,

"I am the lion's maternal uncle, Narahari Das,
With long flowing beard,
I gobble up fifty tigers at a glance."

"Oh, my lord!" Cried the fox and ran off as fast as he could. He did not stop even to breathe untill he reached the tiger's den. The tiger was surprised and said, "What's up, my dear nephew? You left just a while ago. Why have you come back in such hot haste?" The fox breathing heavily said, "Uncle, I am undone! A Narahari Das has occupied my burrow and he dares to say that he gobbles up fifty tigers at

a time.” Hearing this the tiger became furious, he said, “What! He has the audacity to say so! Well, let’s go and see how he can take a mouthful of fifty tigers!!” The fox said, “No uncle, I dare not go there again, If that rascal rushes at us with his mouth wide open, you will manage to jump off and escape, but what about me? I shall not be able to run fast and that rogue will make a grand feast of me.” The tiger said, “Don’t talk rot. I’ll never leave you behind.” The fox said, “Then tie me up with your tail.” Then the tiger tied him up securely with his tail. The fox thought, “Now uncle won’t be able to leave me behind and make good his escape.”



Just like that they came near the burrow. The kid caught sight of them at a distance and said to the fox,

“O you wretched one! Didn’t I pay you for ten tigers?”

And you now come with only one with his tail stringed up!
What about the others?"

As soon as the tiger heard this, he was seized with terror. "Oh dear! I'm sure the fox has deceived me and brought me to be served as food for Narahari Das", thought the tiger and not for his life would he stay there any longer. He gave a terrific jump covering about twenty-five cubits and ran off with the fox. The poor fox was mercilessly thrown over the path and dragged through thorny shrubs and dashed against uneven lands. He was in a pitiable condition. He was on the verge of death. The more he shouted out in distress the more frightened the tiger became and thought that Narahari Das had been following them. He ran faster and faster and still faster.

Thus rushing about madly hither and thither, they spent the night. Next morning the kid returned home. The fox was severely punished. Thenceforward he was so angry with the tiger that he could never forgive him.

UNCLE TIGER AND NEPHEW FOX

THE fox thought, "Well, uncle tiger, I'll teach you a lesson, just wait and see." He was in terror of Narahari Das, so he did not go to his old burrow. He had found out a new burrow. There was a well near the burrow.

One day the fox saw a mat by the side of the river. He dragged it to his house. He spread it out neatly over the mouth of the well, went to the tiger and said, "Won't you come and visit my new house, uncle?" Hearing this the tiger immediately came to see his new dwelling. The fox invited the tiger to take his seat on the mat spread out on the mouth of the well and said, "Uncle, just wait a moment, I'll bring you some snacks." The tiger was very pleased to hear about snacks and sprang up to sit on the mat. Bang!!! Off went the tiger into the well. Then the fox said, "Fill yourself with as much water as you like, mind you, don't waste even a drop."



There was only a little water in the well, so the tiger was not drowned. At first he was beside himself with fear. With much effort he finally came out. As soon as he came out he said, "Where have you gone, the son of a vixen? I'll give you a good hiding." But, by that time the fox had run away and he could not be traced. From then onwards neither could he go back to his house nor could he go about in search of food. The tiger would surely kill him if ever he chanced to see him even at a distance. He had to go without food for days together. He was practically half-dead. Then he thought, "Well, this will kill me. It's better to go to uncle and try to please him."

So he went to meet the tiger. While he was still far off from the tiger's den, he repeatedly bowed his head in deep reverence and uttered, "Uncle, oh uncle!!" Hearing this the tiger was surprised and said, "Hullo! Is it my nephew?" Immediately the fox ran to him and rubbed off the dust from the tiger's feet with his paws. He said, "Oh, my dear, dear uncle! I love you with all my heart, so I have come to you. You need no longer go about looking for me. You just beat me as hard as you can in your own house." Hearing the words of the fox the tiger got puzzled. He did not beat him but only gave him a good scolding. "Why did you throw me into the well, you wretched scoundrel?" The fox bit his tongue, touched his ears and said, "Oh, God! Can I—I, you nephew, — throw you into the well? Isn't it unbelievable? The soil there was very soft, you jumped upon it and, as ill luck would have it, it gave in and turned into a big hole. Is there anywhere a brave hero like you?" Hearing this the foolish tiger smiled and said, "That's right, my dear nephew! I couldn't realise it at that time."

Thus they became friends again. After that, one day, the fox went to the river-side and saw that a crocodile as long as twenty cubits was basking in the sun on the shore. He ran to the tiger and said, "Uncle, oh uncle! I have bought a boat, come and see." The foolish tiger took the crocodile for a boat and was going to spring on its back. In the twinkling of an eye the crocodile gripped him with his teeth and went deep into the water. Seeing this, the fox went home, dancing and singing—Tra la la—ha ha ha—trua tua la—hua hua hua.

THE FOOLISH WEAVER AND THE FOX

THERE was a foolish weaver. One day he went to the field with his sickle to cut grass and fell fast asleep in the middle of the field. Waking up he took the sickle in his hand and found that it had become very hot. The sickle was hot because it had been lying directly under the burning rays of the sun but the weaver thought that it had developed fever. Then he began to howl, “Alas, my sickle is going to die!”



A peasant was working in the adjoining field. Hearing the weaver’s lamentation he said, “What’s up?” The weaver said, “My sickle has fever.” The peasant laughed and said, “Dip it in the water, the temperature will go down.” The sickle cooled down as he held it under water. The weaver too was very happy.

After that, one day, the weaver’s mother had fever. People advised him to call in a doctor. The weaver said, “I know what to do.” He took his mother to a pond and clasped her under the water. The more restless she became, the tighter was his grasp— “Wait, wait, the temperature is coming down”, said he. Then the weaver

began to cry at the top of his voice. He did not take food for three days nor did he leave the side of the pond to go home.

The weaver had friendship with a certain fox. When the fox saw the weaver crying he said, "Oh, my dear friend! Stop crying. I'll arrange your marriage with the king's daughter". The weaver wiped his tears and went home. After that he would pester the fox day in and day out saying, "Well, my friend, didn't you say something the other day?" The fox said, "Don't you worry! I'll surely do what I have said. But, first of all, go and weave some fine clothes." The weaver wove fine clothes for two months. Then the fox told him to take a good bath with soap and water and himself went out to ask for the king's daughter.

The fox stuck a pen behind his ear, placed a turban on his head, put on his best dress and shoes, covered himself with a wrapper, carried an umbrella under his arm and made his appearance before the king. The king thought within himself, "This must be a very learned one." He asked, "Oh learned fox! What brought you here?" The fox said, "Oh king! I have come to know if you are willing to give your daughter in marriage with our king." Well, the fox had not told a lie. The name of that weaver was 'Raja', that is, 'King'. The king thought that the fox was speaking about the ruler of a kingdom. He said eagerly, "Tell me all about your king." The fox said,

"Our lord, the king is very fine,
His house is flooded with moonshine,
He is as intelligent as he is learned;
Beware! he strikes ten at a time,
People are fed and clothed as he's benign".

The weaver was really very handsome. So the fox said, "He is very fine." There was no roof in his hut so the fox said, "flooded with moonshine." But the king thought that his house was as bright and gorgeous as his own palace. He had neither intelligence nor education, so the fox said, "As intelligent as learned." "He strikes ten at a time";—this statement was also true. But he brought down at one stroke not ten men but ten paddy plants. He was a peasant. So he used to reap paddy with his sickle. But the king thought that he was very brave. He could kill ten people at one stroke. He cultivated the land and produced paddy, he would also weave clothes. Rice comes out of paddy. People eat rice and wear clothes. So the fox said, "People eat and cover themselves with clothes owing to his benevolence. The words had a different meaning for the king, he thought that the person of whom the fox was speaking supplied food and clothing to many poor people.

So the king was very glad and gave the fox one thousand rupees as his reward and said, "Who else will become my son-in-law? Bring your king here, the wedding

ceremony will take place after eight days.” The fox carried the purse containing one thousand rupees under his arm and returned to the weaver, dancing all the way. He found the weaver engaged in weaving clothes. The weaver had been weaving so many clothes continuously for two months that each and every villager could be supplied with a cloth. The fox presented two rupees and a cloth to each villager and said, “You are all invited to attend the wedding ceremony of our friend with the king’s daughter. The wedding will take place after eight days.” Hearing this, everybody was very glad. The weaver, though a simpleton, was very good-hearted and was loved by all.



The fox went to the other foxes and said, “Brothers, my friend is going to marry, he invites you all. You will have to sing on this occasion.” All the foxes shouted out in one voice, “That’s fine, we’ll certainly go.” Then the fox went to the frogs and said, “Listen, my friends, you have all been invited to attend the marriage ceremony of my friend. You will have to sing.” Then frogs grunted and

said, "Be sure! We'll be glad to go." Then the fox went to the blackbirds. "Listen, my dear brothers, you are invited to sing at the marriage ceremony of my friend." The birds chattered together and said, "Yes, yes, we shall certainly go." Then the fox went to all species of birds and invited them. They said joyfully, "Yes, yes, we will go."

The fox took seven days to make all these arrangements. Next day the marriage ceremony would take place at night. The fox hired a beautiful dress for the weaver. When he put it on, he really looked magnificent—just like a real king. All the invitees assembled there. At the right time they all started for the king's palace.

When the king's palace was a mile off, then addressing the gathering the fox said, "Brethren, you can see the illuminations of the king's palace from here. proceed on slowly towards that light. In the meantime I shall hurry on and inform the king." All of them said, "That's all right." The fox said, "Start singing at the top of your voice, all of you.

Instantly five thousand foxes started howling, 'Hua! Hua! Hua!! Twelve thousand frogs sang, "Croak, croak, croak!!" Seven thousand blackbirds said, "Chiki, chiki, chirp, chirp!!" Two thousand magpies said, "Chaka, chaka, chaka!!" Four thousand doves sang, "Ghu, ghu, ghu, ghu, ghu, ghu!!" Three thousand sparrows said, "Twit, twit, twit, twit, twit, twit!!" Nineteen thousand fish-eagles shouted, "Aha, aha, oh, ho, ho, ho!!" The nightingales, the peacocks, the cuckoos and all the others began to sing their songs. If anybody would have been present there, he must have realised what effect the music had produced. The inmates of the king's house trembled with fear. When the fox came to inform the king, then he said with great concern, "Oh learned fox! What is the cause of this terrible uproar?" The fox said, "That is the sound of our music and the hubbub of our invited guests," The king was seized with terror—where would he accomodate so many people! What would he offer them to eat!! He was at his wit's end. He said, "Well, what shall I do?" The fox said, "Don't worry, I'm going back immediately and sending them back. I shall only bring our king to you."

The king was overwhelmed with joy and awarded him five thousand rupees. Returning, the fox bought a large quantity of puffed rice and small fish. He spread them out in the middle of the field and said, "You all now have a grand feast." Hardly had the words fallen from his mouth when the foxes, the frogs and the birds struggled with one another to secure the edibles. The villagers were also sumptuously fed by the fox and sent home. Then he came back to the king with the weaver. On the way he had said to the weaver, "Beware! Don't utter a single word or there will be no marriage."

All the people in the king's palace were charmed to see the bridegroom. They only regretted that the handsome groom did not utter a word. The fox said, "His

mother has died, he is grief-stricken, so he remains silent.” Hearing this, everybody said, “Ah, poor fellow!” But the fact was that the weaver would be exposed if he talked, so the fox had forbidden him to speak.

At dinner-time he was served rice in a gold dish and curries and sweets in hundreds of gold bowls. He took all the bowls, one by one, in his hand and took the smell of each one of them. But as nothing was familiar to him he mixed everything with the rice. He ate some of it, then he was about to tie up the leftover in his wrapper. Everybody said to the fox, “Why does your friend behave so strangely? Didn’t he taste anything of this sort before?” The fox winked and whispered to them, “He doesn’t mix rice with anything else more than once and he ties up the leftover in a wrapper and gives it away to a poor man”. Saying this the fox took off the wrapper with food tied up, from the weaver’s body to give it away to a poor man.

The weaver was really in trouble when he went to sleep. The bed was spread on an ivory bed-stead and there was a mosquito-curtain hanging over it. The poor fellow had never before seen a bed-stead or a mosquito-curtain. At first he crawled under the bed-stead but there was no bed, so he came out. He went round and round the curtain but failed to find an entry, then he said, “Now I understand, they have made a room within a room and the door is surely on the top.” So he was about to climb to the roof of the curtain when—bang!!! Down he came on the floor with everything out of joint. Then he burst into tears and said, “Alas! I was quite happy when I would cut paddy corns and weave clothes. But now I have married the princess and broken my spine!” It was sheer luck that there was nobody else besides the king’s daughter. The fox was sitting outside. The king’s daughter shed a lot of tears and scolded the fox. But she was highly intelligent, she did not mention this incident to anybody else.

Next day, according to the advice of the princess, the fox went to the king and said, “O king! Your son-in-law has expressed the desire to travel through different places with your daughter. He wants your permission.” The king was very glad. He permitted them to go and gave them lots of money and attendants. Then the king’s daughter went to a distant land with the weaver, engaged several tutors to make him proficient in different spheres. The weaver turned out to be a very brave and learned man within two or three years.

Then the news arrived that the king had breathed his last and as he had no son he had made his son-in-law the king. Thus it was a great occasion for rejoicing.

THE OLD WOMAN WITH A HUMP

THERE was an old, old woman with a hump on her back. She bent low and supported herself with a stick, her head would always move this way and that. She had two pet dogs, one was named Ranga, the other Bhanga.

The old woman wished to go to her grand daughter's house. So she said to her dogs, "Stay back in the house, don't you go anywhere else." Ranga and Bhanga said, "We will certainly do as you say." Then she bent on her stick and set out, her head moved this way and that.

In this way she was going along when from a distance a fox saw her and said, "Well, well, that hunch-backed woman is coming along,—Hullo, granny, I'll eat you up." The old woman said, "Wait, wait, let me come back from my grand daughter's house. Eat me when I have some flesh in my body. What will you get now from this emaciated body of mine? You will have only bone and skin." Hearing this the fox said, "Very well, move on and put on some flesh, then I will eat you." Saying this, he went away.



Again the old woman bent down on her stick and went on, her head moved this way and that. In this way she went a little distance. Then a tiger saw her and said, “Well, well, well!!! It’s that old woman coming along—Hullo, aged one! I’ll eat you.” The old woman said, “Wait, wait, wait !! Let me go to my grand daughter’s house and put on flesh, then you may eat me. What will you get now from this emaciated body of mine? Nothing but skin and bone.” Hearing this the tiger said, “Very well, go and fatten yourself, then I’ll eat you.”

Then the old woman bent down on her stick and tottered on, her head moved this way and that. She thus went on a little way when a bear saw her and said, “Well, well, well!!! That hunch-backed woman is coming along—Hullo, old dear, I will eat you up.” The old woman said, “Wait, wait. Let me come back from my grand daughter’s house where I shall put on some flesh; then you may eat me. What will you get from this emaciated body of mine? Only skin and bone!” Hearing this the bear said, “Very well, go and fatten yourself, then I’ll eat you.” Saying this the bear went away.

After a short while she reached her grand daughter’s house. There she ate a great deal of curd and thick milk; and ooh! How fat she become!! It was really unbelievable!!! She would just burst if she grew fat any more. So she said to her grand daughter, “Oh, my darling! I am going back home. But I shall not be able to walk any more, I shall have to roll on. The trouble is that the bear, the tiger and the fox are eagerly waiting for me on the way; as soon as they see me, they will eat me up. Now tell me what I’m to do.” The grand daughter said, “There is nothing to fear. I shall put you inside this gourd. Then they will not be able to make out what is what and you will be saved.”

So she popped the old dearie into the gourd, gave her some flattened rice and tamarind to eat and then—heigh—ho!! She gave it a big push and off went the gourd rolling on and on like a carriage. The gourd rolled on and the old woman started singing from inside,

“Roll, you gourd, roll, roll, roll,
I’m eating flattened rice and tamarind,
Bringing out seeds, ting! ting! ting!
Far, far, far, away goes the old thing.”

On the way the bear had been waiting to eat the old woman. He could not see any trace of her, he only saw a gourd rolling on. He examined the gourd closely and found that it was neither the old woman nor a thing worthy to be eaten, but somebody was saying from within - “Far, far away goes the old thing.” Hearing this, he thought that the old woman had gone far away. Then he said, “Ugh!” And gave it a big push and the gourd rolled on and on like a carriage.

The gourd was rolling on and the old woman was saying from within,—

“Roll, you gourd, roll, roll, roll,
I’m eating flattened rice’n tamarind,
Bringing out seeds, ting! ting! ting!
Far, far, far away goes the old thing.”

A little way off the tiger was sitting on the middle of the road and waiting to eat the old woman. He could not see her but found a gourd rolling on. He watched it from this side and that and found that it was neither the old woman nor a thing to eat. Somebody was mumbling from within, “Far, far, far away goes the old thing!” Hearing this, he thought that the old woman had gone away. He grunted and gave the gourd a big push, it rolled on and on and on like a carriage. The gourd rolled on and the old woman muttered from within,

“Roll, you gourd, roll, roll, roll,
I’m eating flattened rice’n tamarind,
Bringing out seeds, ting! ting! ting ,
Far, far, far away goes the old thing.”

A little way off that fox had been waiting in the middle of the road. Seeing the gourd, he said, “Faugh! Does a gourd speak? I must see what is there inside it.” The wicked one gave it a kick and smash!!! The gourd broke into pieces. The fox said, “Hullo, old thing! I’ll eat you up” The old woman said, “Certainly, my dear, certainly. What have I come here for? But wouldn’t you like to hear one or two songs first?” The fox said, “Ooh! That’s a nice idea. I, too, can sing—only a little, of course.” The old woman said, “That’s good. Come, let’s go to the top of that mound and then sing.” Saying this, the old woman climbed up the mound and shouted out a musical note, “Come on, come on! Ranga-a-a, Bhanga-a-a! Run, run, run!!!” Immediately her two dogs came running. One caught hold of the fox’s neck and the other his waist. “Heigh-ho! Heigh-ho! Heigh-ho!” They pulled him from either side. His neck was twisted, his waist was dislocated, his tongue came out, he breathed his last—still they went on pulling him from either side—Heigh-ho! Heigh-ho! Heigh-ho!

THE OLD WOMAN WITH LICE ON HER HEAD

ONCE there was an old woman, her head was infested with lots and lots of lice. When she would serve food to her husband, lots and lots of lice would drop on his dish in a gushing stream. One day it so happened that her old man lost his temper and struck the old woman with a stick. Then the old woman smashed the rice-pot on the floor in anger and went along the bank of the river. The old man called her back but in vain. She did not return.



A crane was sitting by the side of the river. He saw the old woman and said, "O lousy oldster, where are you going?" The woman said,

"My old man gave me a good beating
In a rage my household I'm leaving."

The crane said, "Why did your husband beat you? What was the reason?" The lousy old woman said, "Well, the lice dropped from my head on his dish at dinner time." The crane said, "Why? Lice are delicious to eat. Why should he beat you for that? You better come to my house. I hear that you are a very good cook." So the old woman became a cook in the crane's house. The dishes she prepared were delicious, moreover the crane would be very glad if lice dropped on his dish from her head.

One day it so happened that the crane brought a big Shole fish and said to her, "Oh, lousy old dear! Make a delicious dish out of this fish." Saying this he went to the bank of the river. As ill luck would have it, while the poor woman was cooking, her head reeled and she fell down on the frying pan—nobody knew when it had happened. The crane came back and found that the lousy old woman had been burnt to death. He was so depressed that he remained sitting on the side of the river. He did not take food for seven days.

The river said, "Good gracious! He has been sitting here for seven days without taking any food. What is wrong with him? Look here, brother, what's the matter?" The crane said, "Alas! What's the use of saying that? What has happened has happened."

The river said, "Do tell me, brother." The crane said, "If I tell you all your water will turn into froth." The river said, "Let it be so, I don't mind, you tell me." The crane said,

"The lousy old woman breathed her last
For seven days the crane has been on fast."

In the twinkling of an eye, the water of the river turned white and frothy.

An elephant used to come everyday to drink water from the river. He came on that day and lo! What a sight he saw! The elephant said, "Oh, river! What is the matter with you? How has all your water turned into froth?" The river said, "If I tell you that, your tail will drop down." The elephant said, "I shan't mind, do tell me." Then the river said,

"The lousy old woman died in the fire,
The crane starved for seven long days,
The water of the river turned into foam."

Thump!! The elephant's tail dropped off in a trice.

Then while the elephant was going along under the tree, the tree saw him and said, "Well! Well! Well! What has happened to you? Where's your tail gone?"

The elephant said, "If I tell you that, all your leaves will fall off then and there."

The tree said, "Be it so, you just tell me." The elephant said,

"The lousy old woman died in the fire,
The crane starved for seven days,
The water of the river turned into foam,
The tail of the elephant has just dropped off."

Immediately,—Sssh! Sssh! Sssh! The tree was shorn off all its leaves.

There was a dove's nest on that tree. The dove had been out in search of food. When he returned he saw—Oh! What's that? He said, "Hallo, tree, what's the matter with you? Where are all your leaves?" The tree said, "If I tell you that, you will become blind." The dove said, "Never mind, go ahead with your story." Then the tree said,

"The lousy old woman died in the fire,
The crane starved for seven days,
The water of the river turned into foam,
The tail of the elephant just dropped off,
Now the tree has shed all its leaves,"

Phut!! The dove became blind of one eye in a twinkling. The one-eyed dove went to the field to feed himself when the cow-boy of the king's house came and said, "What's that, dove dear? What's wrong with your eye?" The dove said, "If I tell you that, your stick will get stuck in the palm of your hand." The cow-boy said, "Let it be so. You must tell me." Then the dove said,

"The lousy old woman died in the fire,
The crane starved for seven days,
The water of the river turned into foam,
The tail of the elephant just dropped off,
The tree on the river side shed all its leaves,
Now the dove has lost one of his eyes."

No sooner had he uttered the words than the stick got stuck in the cowboy's hand. He shook his hand with all his might but, alas! The stick was not to be thrown off.

When he came back to the king's house he was still shaking his hand to throw off the stick. The maid servant of the king's house was at that moment going to throw out the ashes stacked in a shattered winnowing fan. She said to the cow-boy, "Get off, you lout! What makes you shake your hand in such a manner? What in God's name is the matter with your hand?" The cow-boy said, "If I tell you that, you will not be able to take off that winnowing fan from your hand." The maid servant said, "Rubbish! Well, let it get stuck, you speak out." Then the cow-boy said,

“The lousy old woman died in the fire,
The crane starved for seven days.
The water of the river turned into foam,
The tail of the elephant just dropped off,
The tree on the riverside shed all its leaves,
The poor dove lost one of his eyes,
Now the stick has stuck to the cowboy’s hand.”

“Good Heavens; what’s this? What has befallen me?” The maid-servant cried out. She tried hard, but the winnowing fan did not come off her hand. Then she started abusing the cow-boy and went back to the kitchen.

She stood there with the winnowing fan in her hand. The queen was then making the king’s dish ready for the dinner. She laughed when she saw the maid-servant. She said. “What’s the matter with you? Why don’t you let go the winnowing fan from your hand?” The maid servant said, “O mother ; if I tell you that then you will not be able to leave the dish out of your hand, it will get stuck to your hand.” The queen said, “Indeed ! Well, tell me and I’ll see.” Then the maid-servant said,

“The lousy old woman died in the fire,
The crane starved for seven long days,
The water of the river turned into foam,
The tail of the elephant just dropped off,
The tree on the riverside shed all its leaves,
The poor dove lost one of his eyes,
The stick got stuck in the cow-boy’s hand,
Now the winnowing fan has got stuck in the maid’s hand.”

The dish immediately got stuck in the queen’s hand. By no means she could get rid of it.

So what could she do ? She made another dish ready for the king and took it to him. Seeing her, the king said, “My dear queen! Why are you holding that dish in your hand?” The queen said, “If I tell you that you will not be able to raise yourself up. You will remain glued to your seat.” The king burst into laughter and said, “Well, I accept it, you tell me.” Then the queen said,

“The lousy old woman died in the fire,
The crane starved for seven long days,
The water of the river turned into foam,
The tail of the elephant just dropped off,
The tree on the riverside shed all its leaves,
The poor dove lost one of his eyes,
The stick got stuck in the cow-boy’s hand,



The winnowing fan got stuck in the maid's hand,
Now the dish has got stuck in the queen's hand."

As soon as she said that the king got stuck in his wooden seat. What a terrible effort did he make to get off the seat! But all was in vain. The servants were summoned; they too failed to do anything.

Then the king was carried to the court on his wooden seat by four men. The courtiers found themselves in an awkward position. They were bubbling inside with laughter but could not laugh lest the king should get angry. Nobody dared to ask what was wrong with the king. Then the king himself said, "I guess, you are dying to know how I got stuck to my wooden seat." With folded hands they said, "Yes, Your Majesty." The king said, "If I tell you that, you, too, will get stuck to your seats." They said, "What's the harm in that if our king himself remains fastened in his seat?" Then the king said,

"The lousy old woman died in the fire,
The crane starved for seven long days,
The water of the river turned into foam,
The tail of the elephant just dropped off,
The tree on the reverside shed all its leaves,
The poor dove lost one of his eyes,
The stick got stuck in the cow-boy's hand,
The winnowing fan got stuck in the maid's hand,
The dish got stuck in the queen's hand,
Now I am stuck in my wooden seat."

As soon as the words were uttered there was no way out for the courtiers. They got stuck in their seats so securely that it was simply impossible for them to get up.

Fortunately, there lived a sharp-witted barber in that country. Otherwise, all of them would have been in a fix. The barber came there and said, "Be quick and fetch a carpenter." Then a carpenter came and cut the wooden seat off from the king's back and made the courtiers free by cutting off the wooden platform. Little bits of wood were still sticking. He scraped them clean. The dish in the queen's hand, the winnowing fan in the maid's hand and the cowboy's stick were also chopped off.

THE OLD WOMAN WHO ATE RICE SOAKED IN WATER

ONCE there was an old woman who used to eat stale rice soaked in water. She was particularly fond of rice soaked overnight in water .

Every night a thief used to come and eat up the soaked rice of that old woman. So, supporting herself on a stick, she set out to complain against the thief to the king. She was going along the side of a pond. A cat-fish saw her and said, "Hullo, old woman, where are you going ?" The old woman said, "Every night a thief comes and eats up my stale rice soaked in water, so I am going to the king to complain against the thief." The cat-fish said, "While you return, take me with you for your own good." The old woman said, "All right."



Then the old woman was going under a *bael* (marmelos) tree. One marmelos was lying on the ground, it said, "Where are you going, old woman ?" The old woman said, "A thief eats up my rice soaked in water every night. I am going to the king to complain against him." The marmelos said, "Take me along with you

while you go back. It is for your own good." The old woman said, "I'll do so." Then she saw a lump of cow-dung beside the road. The cow-dung said, "Hullo, oldster, where are you going?" The old woman said, "The rice I keep soaked overnight in water is eaten up by a thief night after night. I'm going to complain against him to the king." The cow-dung said, "Make sure to take me with you while you return, for your own good." The old woman said, "That I'll do."

Going a short distance the old woman saw a razor lying by the side of the road. The razor said, "Hullo, old woman, where are you going?" The woman said, "A thief comes every night and eats up my rice soaked in water. So I am going to complain to the king." The razor said, "While you return don't forget to take me with you for your own good." The old woman said, "Of course, I will take you." Then she went to the king's palace and found that the king was not there. So she could not complain.

While returning home she remembered the razor, cow-dung, marmelos and the cat-fish and took all of them in her bag. When the old woman came to the yard of her house, the razor said, "Please put me on the grass." The old woman did so. When she was about to enter her house the cow-dung said, "Please place me here on a wooden seat." So the old woman kept the cow-dung on a wooden plank. When she entered the house the marmelos said, "Please keep me inside the oven." That was done. At last the cat-fish said, "Please keep me inside your rice soaked in water." The old woman did so. The night advanced. She had her supper and fell asleep.

At midnight the thief came. He did not in the least suspect what the old woman had in her mind. He dipped his hand into the earthen pot containing the rice and also the cat-fish. The cat-fish stung him with its pointed bone so deeply that tears rolled down his cheeks. Being pricked by the fish-bone the thief went near the oven crying. There was the marmelos in the oven.

As soon as the thief put his hand into the oven in order to foment it,—bang!!! The marmelos cracked and hit his eyes and face. Then in pain and in fear, as the flabbergasted thief was rushing out of the room he stepped in the cow-dung. He slipped and bump! He sat flat on that lump of cow-dung. Then that rogue, covered with cow-dung, went out to wipe his feet on the grass! The razor was lying hidden among the grass, it cut deep into his skin. Then could the poor fellow remain silent any longer? He cried out, "Oh, Lord! I'm dying. What shall I do?" Hearing this the people of that locality rushed out of their houses and shouted, "Catch hold of that sneaking thief. Give him a sound thrashing!! Pull out his ears!!" Just think of the punishment that the thief had to undergo.

THE SPARROW AND THE CROW

THE crow and the sparrow were very close friends.

Paddy and chillies were spread out on a mat under the sun in the householder's yard. Seeing this the sparrow said to the crow, "Friend, will you be able to finish the chillies or I the paddy first?" The crow said, "I shall eat the chillies faster than you." The sparrow said, "Certainly not, I shall eat up the paddy before you can finish the chillies." The crow said, "If you fail to do so what will happen?" The sparrow said, "If I can't do so you will peck at my chest and eat it. And if you fail what will happen?" The crow said, "You will peak at my chest and eat it."



The sparrow and the crow started eating the paddy and the chillies. The sparrow nibbled at every grain of paddy and the crow gobbled up the chillies one by one very fast. Within a short time the crow finished eating all the chillies, but, alas ! The sparrow had finished only a quarter of the whole amount of paddy. Then the crow said, "Well, friend, what is to be done now?" The sparrow said, "What else? You will certainly eat my heart if, being a friend, you really want to do so. But

make sure that you first wash your beak clean. You eat dirty things.” The crow said, “Very well, I’m going to wash my beak.”

Saying this, the crow went to the Ganges to wash his beak. Then the Ganges said, “Wait! Wait! Don’t touch me with your dirty beak. Take some water in a pot and wash your beak.” The crow said, “Very well, I’m going to bring a pot.” Then he went to the potter and said,

“Oh Potter ! Potter ! Give me a pot,
I’ll take water in the pot to wash my beak,
And then shall I eat the sparrow’s breast.”

The potter said, “I haven’t got a pot. Find me a lump of clay, I shall make one for you.” Hearing this, the crow went to the buffalo to beg of him one of his horns, he would dig the earth with that horn. The crow said,

“Oh, dear buffalo! Give me your horn,
I’ll dig the earth, the earthen pot will be made,
I’ll fill it with water, wash my beak,
And then—I’ll eat the sparrow’s breast.”

The buffalo became furious and charged at him with such force that the crow left the place in the twinkling of an eye. Then he went to a dog and said,

“Oh, doggie dear! Please kill the buffalo,
I’ll take the horn and dig the earth,
A pot will be made out of the earth,
I’ll fill it with water, wash my beak,
And then the sparrow’s breast shall I eat.”

The dog said, “First of all, bring some milk. I’ll drink it, gain strength, and then I shall kill the buffalo.” The crow went to the cow and said, “Oh cow! Give me some milk, the dog will take it and become fresh, he will kill the buffalo, I’ll take the horn, dig the earth, have a pot made with it, fill it with water and wash my beak, and then I’ll eat the sparrow’s breast.” The cow said, “Go and bring me some grass, I’ll feed upon it and then I shall give you milk.”

Hearing this, the crow went to the field and said, “Oh, field! Give me grass, the cow will eat it and give me milk, the dog will take the milk and become fresh, he will kill the buffalo, I’ll take the horn, dig the earth, the pot will be made, I’ll fill it with water, wash my beak and then the sparrow’s breast shall I eat.” The field said, “There’s plenty of grass, why don’t you take it ?”

Then the crow went to the blacksmith’s house and said, “Black-smith ! Oh, Blacksmith ! Give me a sickle, I’ll cut the grass and feed the cow, the cow will give me milk for the dog, the dog being fresh will kill the buffalo, I’ll take his horn, dig the earth, have a pot made with it, fill it with water from the Ganges and wash my beak and then I’ll eat the sparrow’s breast.” The blacksmith said, “There’s

no fire here. Bring me fire and I'll make you a sickle."

The crow went to the householder and said, "Oh brother! Give me fire to make a sickle, I'll cut grass with it, the cow will eat the grass and give milk, the dog will have it and become fresh. He'll kill the buffalo, I'll take the horn, dig the earth, have a pot shaped out of it, fill it with water and wash my beak. Then I'll eat the sparrow's breast."

Then the householder brought a big pot full of blazing fire and said, "How will you take it?" The foolish crow spread out his wings, and said, "Just pour it on my wings." No sooner had the householder turned over the fiery pot upon the crow's wings than the fool met with his death. His plan to eat the sparrow's breast remained unfulfilled.

THE LIGER OVER A TIGER

THERE was a weaver. He had a son spoilt by over-indulgence. He must have every single thing he wanted.

One day the son of a rich man was going along the side of the weaver's house, riding on a horse. Seeing him the weaver's son said to his father, "Father ! How is it that I have no horse! Bring me a horse." The weaver said, "I am a poor man, how is it possible for me to bring a horse ? A lot of money is needed to buy a horse." His son said, "That won't do. You will have to bring a horse for me by any means." Saying this he at first danced while he cried, then he rolled allover the floor while crying, then he got up and broke his father's hubble-bubble. Still his father would not buy a horse for him. So as a last resort he started fasting.

Then the weaver was in a fix. As his son was by no means taking food, he thought, "Now I must buy a horse for him, there's no escape. Let me see if I have any money in the house." After a long search he could get hold of some rupees. Then he tied them in his clothes and went to the market to buy a horse.

Going to the market the weaver said to the owner of a horse, "Hullo! What shall I have to pay for your horse ? How many rupees ?" The owner of the horse said, "It will cost you fifty rupees." He had only five rupees tied up in his clothes, where would he get fifty rupees ? So in a very sad mood, he started on his way to home.

At that time two persons were standing there and quarrelling with each other. One was saying, "You will be in a tight corner, mind you." The other said, "There'll be nothing but horse's egg." Well, horses do not lay eggs; so when it is said that horse will lay eggs it means that nothing will happen. But the weaver did not know that; hearing about a horse's egg, he said eagerly, "Oh, brother, can you tell me where I shall get a horse's egg?" One of them was a very wicked person. He said to the weaver, "Come with me, I have a horse's egg in my house." He took the weaver to his house and presented him a melon saying, "Take your horse's egg. Just see, it is ready to burst open. Very soon, the foal will come out. Beware, let not the foal run away." Ah! How glad was the weaver! He asked the man, "What is the price?" The rogue said, "Five rupees." Immediately the weaver paid him five rupees and took the melon.

Inside the melon the reddish colour could be seen through the cracks. The weaver thought, "If the foal gets out and tries to escape I shall immediately catch hold of him. Then I'll tie up his neck with my wrapper and drag him home. I'll

never let him go even if he jumps.”

Thinking of various things the weaver came to the side of the river and just then he felt very thirsty. He left the melon on the bank of the river and went to quench his thirst. In the meantime a fox came there from nowhere, the weaver had not noticed him. By the time he was drinking water, the fox, too, nearly finished eating the melon. Just at that time the weaver Could see him and presently chased him, shouting out, “Oh! I am undone! My foal is running away.”



Wasn't it an impossible task for the weaver to run after a fox and catch him? There's no accounting for the fields and the woods through which the fox led

him. At last the weaver was too tired to move on. He returned to go home, but, alas! He had lost his way.

It was late at night. So returning home at that late hour was simply out of the question. The weaver hunted out a place for shelter during the night-time in an old woman's hut. There were only two rooms in that hut. The old woman and her grand-daughter slept in one room and all their belongings were stacked in the other room. That room was given to the weaver to put up for the night.

A tiger used to come every night behind the old woman's hut. The old woman knew that, so she would never go out of her room at night neither did she allow her grand daughter to do so. But the grand daughter had heard only a little about the horse's egg from the weaver. She wanted to go again to the weaver's room to hear the story in details. Her granny said, "No, no, you mustn't go out, a tiger or a liger will catch hold of you."

Now people often say "Bagh (tiger) tag (liger)" in Bengali in the course of their conversation. There is actually no animal called a *tag* (liger). But the tiger did not know that. Sitting behind the hut he heard about the *tag* or 'liger' and was very much worried. He thought within himself that the 'liger' was a more dangerous animal than him or he must be a demon or a ghost. He was seized with terror and looked for a way of escape in case the "liger" made his appearance.

A little later the weaver came out to see if the day had dawned. Immediately he saw the tiger and thought, "Oh! There sits my foal." He rushed out, covered the tiger's nose, mouth and throat with his wrapper and sprang upon the tiger's back. What a fright did the tiger have! He started violently and thought, "Alas! I am done for! The 'liger' must have caught hold of me." Out of fear for his life the tiger ran as fast as he could. But his eyes were tied up so it was not possible for him to run faster.

The weaver had been riding on his back from the very beginning as he had thought that it was his foal. He decided that when the daylight would break, he would know his way and go home with the foal. When it became clear he found what a terrible mess he was in. He had taken the tiger for a horse and ridden upon it. What to do then? He regretted that there was no way of escape.

While rushing on, the tiger was saying, "For God's sake, O big brother liger, do come down from my back, I'll worship you." The weaver knew that the tiger was calling him 'liger'. The thought that was uppermost in his heart was how he could get out of it.

When the tiger was passing under a banyan tree, the branches of which were within reach, the weaver caught hold of a branch and got up on the tree. Then he said, "Thank God! I have been saved." The tiger, too, said, "I am saved."

But what was the good of getting up on a tree? He would have to come down.

That wicked tiger instead of running away sat under the tree and was panting for breath. He called all the other tigers at the top of his voice. Attracted by his shouts four or five tigers came there and said, "What's the matter? Who has tied your eyes?" The tiger panted and said, "Oh, my brothers! I've just come back from death's door. I was caught by a liger. With folded hands I prayed to him and promised him offerings, only then he let me go. That rogue has tied up my eyes and left me here. If I don't give him offerings he will again catch hold of me."

Hearing this the tigers assembled there began to worship the 'liger'. The tigers came by batches bringing with them huge buffaloes and antelopes as offering. The weaver had never in his life seen such an assembly of tigers. His fear was boundless, he sat on the tree and trembled all over.

The weaver and the leaves of the tree were fluttering. The tigers being nervous looked up but could not see the weaver behind the leaves. One of them said, "Brother, what's that on the top of the tree?" Another one said, "Just see what a big tail he has!" It was not really a tail but the loose end of the weaver's cloth dangling from the branch of the tree. They could not see it clearly behind the leaves. They took it for a tail. Seeing that tail an old tiger remarked, "Well, it seems to be a dangerous animal, it must be the 'liger'. Hearing this, all the tigers shouted out, "He will catch us! Run for life!" And ran away as fast as they could.

Then the weaver, too, came down from the tree and went home. Seeing the weaver his son said, "Father, where's my horse?" His father gave a hard slap on his cheek and said, "Here is your horse." After that the weaver's son never again spoke about a horse.

THE TIGER RODE A PALANQUIN

AS the tiger was the maternal uncle and the fox was his nephew, the two of them were fast friends.

One day the fox invited the tiger but did not prepare any food for him. When the tiger came for dinner the fox said to him, "Uncle, you just wait a moment. There are some more invitees, I'm going to call them." Saying this he went away and did not return home that night. The tiger sat all through the night and in the morning he cursed the fox and returned home.

After that the tiger, one day, invited the fox. When the fox came he was served with big thick bones as hard as steel. The poor fox broke four of his teeth, still he could not crack a single bone. A dish of this type of bones was delicacy for the tiger. He chewed all the bones to his heart's content and had his fill. Then he asked, "Well, my dear nephew, have you had your fill?" The fox laughed and said, "Certainly, uncle, I have had my fill in your house exactly as you had yours in mine." He was fuming with rage within and resolved, "If I can ever teach him a lesson I shall return home or I shall leave it for good." With this resolution the fox left that country and went to live in another country. In that country there were extensive fields of sugar-canes. The fox lived there and ate plenty of sugar canes. He destroyed the sugar-canes that he could not eat. The cultivators said, "Well, well, let us find out the wicked fox that destroys our sugar-canes and let him be punished." They constructed a pound by the side of the field. A pound is made with wood to look just like a little room. As soon as any beast enters, the door of the pound shuts by itself and makes him a prisoner in the pound.

While the cultivators were making the pound the fox was laughing and saying within himself, "Is it for me or for my uncle? It's only proper that uncle should live in such a lovely room." Next day he went to the tiger and said, "Uncle, we have been invited to a big party. I'll sing and you will play on musical instrument on the occasion of the prince's marriage ceremony. Over and above that, a sumptuous feast will follow. They have sent a palanquin for us, will you go?" The tiger said, "Yes, of course. Am I a fool to refuse such a grand feast? They have sent a palanquin too, haven't they?" The fox said, "Ah ! What a palanquin ! It is far, far better than the ordinary one ! You have never ridden such a palanquin in your life."

Then they came by the side of the field where the pound stood. Seeing the pound the tiger said, "How foolish ! Why haven't they sent the palanquin-bearers?"

The fox said, "Once we get into it the bearers will surely come." The tiger said, "There are no rods, how will the bearers carry it?" The fox said, "Don't worry, they'll bring the rods." Hearing him, no sooner had he entered the pound than bang!!! The door was shut. Then the fox said, "Uncle, you have shut the door. How on earth shall I go in?" The tiger said, "Don't bother to get in. Let me alone attend the party," "Very well, uncle, have your fill. Don't eat less." Saying this, the fox went back to his own country, laughing all the way.

In the meanwhile the cultivators came and saw that a tiger was sitting in the pound. Their joy knew no bounds. They called everybody and said, "Bring the spade, bring the spear, bring anything you can get hold of. There is a tiger in the pound. Come, come, all of you." Immediately many people assembled there and beat the tiger to death.

BUDDHU'S FATHER

ONCE upon a time there was an old peasant, he was called, "Buddhu's father." The paddy-corn were ripe in the field of Buddhu's father and swarms of weaver-birds came and ate away all the corns. He made a crackling sound with the help of a split bamboo by striking it hard. His intention was to keep away the birds. But the birds were not to be put off by the sound. So he flared up and said, "Oh, you scoundrels! If I can somehow catch you I'll show you 'idi-midi-kidi' bond." There is no such thing as 'idi-midi-kidi' bond. As the peasant failed to think out a sharper abusive language, he uttered these words. The weaver-birds came day after day and Buddhu's father, having failed to stop them, would always shout, "I'll show you 'idi-midi-kidi' bond."



In the meanwhile it so happened that a huge tiger, one day, came to that field and fell fast asleep. He did not know when the day had dawned. So he could not go away from there. Like all other days Buddha's father was making the sound with the split bamboo in the same manner and saying, "Scoundrels ! If I could only catch hold of you, I would surely show you 'idi-midi-kidi' bond." Hearing about the 'idi-midi-kidi' bond the tiger began to puzzle over the new problem of the said bond. He mused, "Very strange ! It's of a new kind. Never heard before about such a bond." The more he thought about it the more determined he became to see it with his own eyes. So he came out quietly from the paddy-field, called Buddha's father and said, "Excuse me, brother! I have something to ask you." Seeing the tiger Buddha's father was seized with boundless terror. But he was a very intelligent person. With great effort, he managed to look normal so the tiger did not understand anything. He asked the tiger, "What is it, brother?" The tiger said, "The thing you are speaking about—that 'kidi-midi-bond'—can you show it to me for once?" The peasant said, "It's not possible to show it then and there. Different kinds of things are needed for the show." The tiger said, "I'll bring everything you want but I must see it." Buddha's father said, "Very good, first of all, bring me all the things needed, then I'll show you." The tiger said, "What things do you want?" Buddha's father said, "I want a big sturdy bag, a very thick, long rope and a very big club." The tiger said, "Only this much ! I'll take no time in bringing all these things.

The tiger hid himself in the bushes by the side of the road leading to the market. After a short while three men who used to sell parched corn, were going along that road. The bags of parched corn are usually very big and some of them are very sturdy.

The tiger was sitting quietly in the bushes. The men with the parched corn were slowly moving forward and when they came near him—"Gr-r-r-r-r-r-!!!" The tiger growled and springing forth stood in the middle of the road. The men ran hither and thither to escape from the tiger, leaving behind their bags of parched corn. The tiger carried the bags containing parched corn to Buddha's father. Then he went to bring the rope. He did not have to go far for the rope. There were lots of cows tied up with pegs in the field. When the tiger appeared before them, they tore away from the ropes and escaped. The tiger brought all those ropes to Buddha's father. Then he went to bring a club.

The wrestlers were wielding their clubs in their assembly hall when the tiger made his appearance there. They raised a hue and cry and left the place in a hurry. Then the tiger carried the biggest club in his mouth to Buddha's father and said, "Now I've brought all the things you need, show me that thing." Buddha's father said, "Very well, you just step into this bag. The tiger entered into the bag

without delay. Buddhu's father lost no time in tying up the loose end of the bag very tightly with the thick rope, there was hardly any room to move. Then he lifted the club with both of his hands and struck the tiger in the bag with all his might. At the first stroke, the tiger being very much surprised, said, "What's that you are doing?" Buddhu's father said, "Why? I am showing you 'idi-midi-kidi' bond. Are you afraid?" It would be a shameful act on the part of the tiger to admit that he was afraid. So he said, "Certainly not."



Then Buddhu's father rained blow after blow—very hard blows—on the bag. The tiger remained silent for some time lest others should find fault with him. For a long time he shut his mouth. But how long could he keep quiet? After ten of twelve blows were showered upon him he began to shout pitifully. After a short period he lost his strength and began to groan. Still Buddhu's father did not have pity on him. He dealt hard blows, one after another. At last, When the tiger lost all his strength and became very quiet he thought that the tiger had breathed his last. So he untied the bag, brought him out and threw him by the side of the field. Then he came back and kept indoors.

The tiger was still alive. He lay there for four or five hours like one dead, then he got up. He had great pain all over his body and was running high temperature. But he did not care, he was boiling with rage. He rolled his eyes, ground his teeth and said, "Buddhu's father, O you rogue! You, a scoundrel, a rascal, a villain !! Wait, wait, the lesson I'll teach you, you'll never forget it in your life!!!" Hearing this Buddhu's father's face became pale. In no time he shut the door and fastened the latch. He did not come out of his room for three days. During these days the tiger prowled around his room and abused him. Then he went near the door and said in a very soft, gentle voice, "Would you please give me a little fire, brother dear? I would like to smoke."

Buddhu's father noticed that the words were spoken like a human being but the voice was like that of a tiger. He thought that he must make a close inspection before offering fire. So he peeped through the chink of the door and lo! What a disturbing sight did he see !!! It was the tiger himself. Never would he open the door! He groaned and said, "I have been ill with fever, I have no strength left to open the door. You just push your stick under the door, I shall tie up a little fire at the end of the stick." Where would the tiger get a stick ? He pushed his tail through the bottom of the door. Instantly Buddhu's father cut off the tail with a sharp chopper. 'Gr-r-ough'— the tiger shouted out and sprang high up, nearly touching the roof. Then he withdrew the remaining portion of his tail and rushed off shouting at the top of his voice.

Buddhu's father's mind was still filled with apprehensions. He felt that the tigers were sure to come in a body and kill him. His apprehensions were proved to be true. Next day he saw that twenty to twenty-five tigers were coming towards his hut. Then what was he to do? There was a tall tamarind tree behind his hut. He climbed at the top of the tree and remained sitting there. There was an earthen pot tied up. Buddhu's father kept himself hidden behind that and kept a watch on the tigers. The tigers could spot him out behind that earthen pot. Then they called him names, made faces at him and frightened him in many ways. Buddhu's father sat very still behind that pot. He did not utter a single word.

Then the tigers put their heads together and hit upon a plan to catch hold of Buddha's father. The most intelligent among them said, "Let the oldest among us crouch upon the ground. The tiger younger than him, will ride on his shoulder. The next younger one will ride on his shoulder. The next younger one will ride on him. In this way we shall get the rogue within our reach. Then we shall gobble him up."

The oldest among them was that very tiger who had been beaten severely and had lost his tail. The wound in his tail was still raw. So he could not sit on his haunches as it was very painful. But he would have to sit up. He must manage by any means whatsoever. Just then he discovered a hole. He pushed his severed tail-end into the hole and somehow sat up. Then the other tigers got up on his back one by one. In that manner soon they rose nearly as high as Buddha's father; a little bit higher—and they would get him within their reach. Buddha's father thought, "I don't care what happens to me, let me strike a blow for the last time." He untied the earthen pot and held it in his hand—he would smash it on the head of the topmost tiger .

Just at that time an amusing incident happened. The hole into which the tiger had pushed his tail belonged to a crab. Attracted by the smell of raw flesh, the crab quietly came and grabbed the tail with both of his claws. Being pinched by the crab, the tiger with severed tail shouted out — "Oh, goodness me ! Gr-r-r-rh ! H-a-w-m ! What' s this? Buddha's father at the top and Buddha's father at the bottom too!" He jumped up while saying this and then—thump! Bump! Hump!—down came all the tigers on his back, rolling together on the ground. Just at that moment Buddha's father, too, smashed the earthen pot on the tailless tiger's back and shouted out, "Catch him! Catch him! Catch hold of the tiger with severed tail by the neck!"

After that the band of tigers dared not stay there any longer. They withdrew their tails, pricked up their ears and ran away helter-skelter. Never did they come again near the house of Buddha's father.

THE FOOLISH TIGER

THERE lived a jackal near the king's palace. He had a burrow behind the pen of the king's sheep. The king's sheep were very nice and healthy. Whenever the jackal saw them he yearned for the taste of their flesh, but he did not dare to go near them for fear of the cowboys.

Then the jackal began to dig through the earth from his hole and at last could reach at the sheep's pen. But still he failed to feast upon the sheep.

The cowboys were sitting there in a group. As soon as they saw the jackal they caught him and tied him up. Then they fastened him with a rope to a peg and went away. Before departing they said, "Tomorrow we shall have some fun with him then we shall kill him. Tonight it has become too late."

The cowboys went away. The jackal was sitting there with his head hung low. At that moment a tiger was going along that path. Seeing the jackal he was surprised and said, "Well, nephew, what are you doing here?" The jackal said, "I'm going to marry." The tiger said, "But where is the bride? Where are all the people?" The jackal said, "The bride is a princess. The people have all gone to bring her here." The tiger said, "But why have you been tied up?" The jackal said, "I was not at all willing to marry, so they have tied me up lest I should run away." The tiger said, "Is it true? You don't want to marry?" The jackal said, "It's true, uncle, I don't have the least desire to marry." Hearing this, the tiger said very eagerly, "Then why don't you tie me up in your place and go away?" The jackal said, "I'll do so immediately. You just unfasten the knot and I'll tie you up and leave."

Then the tiger's joy knew no bounds. In no time he set the jackal free. Without a moment's delay the jackal tied him securely with the peg and said, "One bit of advice, uncle. Your brothers-in-law will make fun of you, don't get angry with them." The tiger said, "No, no. Why should I get angry? Am I a fool?" Hearing this the jackal went away laughing and the tiger was waiting eagerly for the bride to come.

In the morning the cowboys came there. Seeing them the tiger thought, "Here are my brothers-in-law. They will now have all sorts of fun and I'll have to laugh and laugh and laugh."

The cowboys had come there to kill the jackal and what did they see? A tiger was sitting there in his place. There was a great uproar. Some were about to run away. Some stopped them and said, "Can't you see he is tied up? There is nothing to fear. Bring the hatchet, the spud and the spear." Then one of them brought a

brick of very big size and threw it at the tiger. The tiger laughed, "Hee! Hee! Hi, Hi, Hi !" Another one struck him with a bamboo. He laughed again, "Hee! Hee! Hi, hi, hi, hi !" The third one poked him with a spear. The tiger said, "Ahh ! Ahh ! Ho-ho, ho-ho, ho-ho! Yes, yes, you are my brothers-in-law, I know." Again they pricked him with the spear. The tiger became furious and said, "Go to hell ! I will never sit for such a nasty marriage." He tore himself away from the bondage and fled into the forest.

The woodcutters used to split logs at a certain place in the forest. They had cut a huge piece of log half-way, separated the two parts with a wedge and had gone away. At that time the tiger came into the forest and found the jackal sitting on that split log and taking rest. The jackal asked him, "How did the marriage ceremony come off ?" The tiger said, "No, nephew, the fun they were having at my cost was intolerable, so I have walked out." The jackal said, "Well done. Now let us sit here and chat together." As soon as he said this the tiger sprang upon the log just at that point where the severed parts were wide apart. His tail dangled through that opening.

The jackal saw that it would be a great fun if he just withdrew the wedge. He kept the tiger engaged in conversation on different topics and shook the wedge very gently. It was in such a position that a little pull at the wedge would bring it off and the tiger's tail would be caught in the trap. Then with the words "Oh ! Uncle ! I'm dying", he fell down with the wedge and kept on rolling on the ground. No words could describe the pitiable plight of the tiger. When his tail was caught in the middle of the split log he yelled at the top of his voice and gave a jump. As a result his tail tore into two pieces. Then the tiger, too, rolled on the ground with the jackal. The tiger said, "Oh, nephew ! This is the end of me. My tail has been torn." The jackal said, "Oh, uncle! I'm finished! My backbone has snapped."

In this manner both of them, rolling on and on, entered a bush of arum lily and lay there. The tiger was unable to move. But the wicked jackal had really nothing to complain. He had been pretending all along to deceive the tiger.

There were many frogs in that bush, the jackal caught hold of them and ate them to his heart's content. The tiger was in great pain. He was not in a position even to see a single frog. How could he eat it ? But he was so hungry that he was sure to die of starvation. Then he said to the jackal, "Nephew have you eaten anything?" The jackal said, "What's there to eat ? I've eaten only these arum lilies. But now I have a distended belly owing to indigestion."

What else should the tiger do? He, too, started chewing those arum lilies. His face and throat swelled up and he was on the verge of death. Seeing this the jackal said, "Uncle, have you eaten anything?" The tiger said, "Yes, nephew, I have. But my throat has swollen. How is it that eating the same thing I have a swollen throat

and you have a distended belly.” The jackal said, “Well, it’s quite natural because I am a jackal and you are a tiger.”

The tiger did not have the strength to get up for sixteen days owing to severe pain in his tail and throat. He was more dead than alive because he had to go without food for those sixteen days. At that time he saw that the jackal had shaken off his shammed illness and was going away. He was very much surprised and asked him, “Nephew, how have you been cured of your illness?” The jackal said, “Uncle, I have discovered a wonderful medicine. I chewed my hands and feet and then and there I was cured. In a moment I got back fresh hands and feet.” The tiger said, “Is it so? Then why didn’t you tell me that?” The jackal said, “Would it be possible for you to chew your own hands and feet. I had a great doubt, so I didn’t tell you anything.” At this the tiger said angrily, “What!! Do you want to say that I shall not be able to do what you, being a contemptible jackal, have done.” The jackal said, “How am I to know that you will be able to chew your limbs when you refused such a grand proposal of marriage for fear of a few jokes?” “Just see whether I can do it or not.” Saying this the foolish tiger chewed his own limbs. Within three or four days he had severe wounds and breathed his last.

THE TIGER'S COOK

ONCE the wife of a tiger died. At the time of her death she had said, "Look after my two cubs." After her death the tiger said, "How am I to attend the children and run the household at the same time?" Hearing this, the other tigers said, "Marry again, then everything will be all right." The tiger, too, thought, "It's not a bad proposal. But I'll not marry a tigress again. They don't know how to cook. This time I'll marry the daughter of a human being. I've heard they can cook very well."



So he went to the village to look for a girl. There a man lived with his son and daughter. He captured the girl, brought her along with him and said to his cubs, "Look here, this is your mother." The cubs said, "How can she be our mother?"

She has neither a tail nor big teeth nor any hair on her body nor stripes. Kill her and we shall have a nice meal." The tiger said, "Shut up ! If you talk like that, I'll tear you to pieces." At this the frightened cubs kept quiet. But they could not at all stand her and would always say, "Let us grow up and be stronger then we will twist your neck and eat you up."

The wretched condition of the girl can best be imagined. When the tiger was out, she would roll on the ground and wail for her parents and brother. When the tiger came back she remained silent in fear. In this way the days dragged on.

In the meanwhile her parents lost their eyesight, crying for her day in and day out. Her brother, too, cried for several days then he said to his parents, "What's the use of shedding tears while remaining shut up in the house ? I'm going, I shall try to find her out." Saying this he went out of the house and wandered about in the forest. While roaming about he at last came to the tiger's den and found his sister. Seeing him his sister began to cry and said, "Oh, brother ! Why have you come? As soon as the tiger returns he will see you and gobble you up." The brother said, "Let him do so. I'll not return without you. Now hide me somewhere, then I'll see." Then they dug a hole in the kitchen. The girl hid her brother in that hole and covered it with a flat grinding stone. The tiger returned and sat down with his cubs to have his dinner. The cubs could not eat with relish. They kept on saying, "Father, Oh father! Is he your brother-in-law? Our maternal uncle? Mother's own brother? He is breathing under that stone; bring him out and let us enjoy a grand feast." On that particular day, the tiger was out of temper with someone else. Hearing the words of the cubs he slapped them hard and did not bother to think about what they had said. Dinner being over, the tiger said to the girl, "Today make some pies for our tiffin. Mind you, they must be good to eat." Saying this he went out.

Then the girl removed the stone and brought her brother out. They had their meals together, lit the oven and placed a cauldron with oil on the fire. Then they cut off the heads of the cubs, suspended them over the oven and made good their escape.

The cubs were hanging over the oven and big drops of blood splashed upon the boiling oil. In the evening the tiger came back and even before he entered the room he could hear the sizzling sound. He said, "Ah, lovely ! The pies are being prepared. It's well and good if the pies are palatable, otherwise three of us — father and sons — will tear the wretched cook to pieces."

As soon as he entered the room he saw what was going on. Then "H-a-u-m" he roared and looked for her all over his den. But nowhere was she to be found. She had, in the meantime, returned to her parents with her brother. The villagers all assembled there and there was boundless joy for all.

TUNI-BIRD AND THE BARBER

TUNI the tailor-bird, went to dance on the leaf of a brinjal tree. While dancing she was pricked by the thorn of brinjal tree and in course of time that turned out to be a big boil. Now what to do? How would the boil be cured ?

Tuni made enquiries from this person and that. Everybody advised him, "Go and have it removed by a barber." So Tuni went to the barber and said, "Oh, barber! My dear brother ! Would you please remove my boil ?" Hearing her the barber curved his neck, wrinkled his nose and said, "What impertinence ! I shave the king. How on earth could you imagine that I'm going to open your boil?" Tuni said, "Very well, just you wait and see whether you'll be going to do that or not." Saying this she went to the king and complained, "Oh respected king ! Why has your barber refused to open my boil ? You will have to punish him."

Hearing this the king burst into laughter, rolled over and over his bed, but he did not say anything to the barber. Tuni was very angry. She went to the mouse and said, "Oh brother mouse! Are you at home ?" The mouse said, "Who is it ? Is it my dear Tuni ? Come, darling, come, tell me everything. Let me spread a bed for you and serve you rice. Will you eat, my dear ?" Tuni said, "I will take rice if you do something for me." The mouse said, "In what way ?" Tuni said, "When the king will be fast asleep then go and make a hole in his belly." Hearing this the mouse bit his tongue, touched his ears and said, "Oh, God Almighty ! I shan't be able to do it."

Tuni got angry with him, went to the cat and said, "Oh, brother cat! Are you at home?" The cat said, "Who is it? Is it my dear Tuni? Welcome, my dear, take your seat. I'll make a bed for you, I'll offer you rice, won't you eat, dearie?" Tuni said, "I will take rice if you kill the mouse." The cat said, "Now it is impossible for me to go and kill the mouse. I am feeling drowsy."

Beside herself with rage, she went to the stick and said, "Oh, stick ! My dear brother ! Are you at home?" The stick said, "Who is it? Is it dear Tuni? You are welcome, sit down. I shall make you a bed and serve you rice. Won't you eat?" Tuni said, "Yes, I will if you beat the cat." The stick said, "What harm has the cat done to me that I have to beat him ? I can't do it."

Then Tuni went to fire and said, "Oh fire dear ! Are you in?" The fire said, "Who is it? Is it our dear Tuni? Come in, take your seat. I'll make you a bed and give you rice to eat. Will you eat, my dear?" Tuni said, "Yes, I'll do so if you burn the stick." Fire said, "I've burnt too many things today, I don't want to burn anything

else.” Tuni rebuked him, went to the sea and said, “Oh, dear sea! Are you at home?” The sea said, “Who is it ? Is it my dear Tuni? Come, come, sit down ! I’ll make a bed for you and offer you rice. Will *you* eat, my dear?” Tuni said, “I shall do it gladly if you put out the fire.” The sea said, “That I can’t.”



Then Tuni went to the elephant and said, “Dear elephant ! Are you there?” The elephant said, “Who is it? Is it my darling Tuni? Come in, please be seated. I shall make a bed for you and give you rice to eat. Won’t you eat?” Tuni said, “I’ll take rice if you just drink up the water of the sea.” The elephant said, “But that’s impossible, with so much water my belly will burst.”

Poor Tuni! Nobody paid any heed to her appeal. At last she went to the mosquito. The mosquito caught sight of her from a distance and said, “Who’s there? Tuni darling? Come, come, be seated. We’ll make you a bed and serve you rice, won’t you eat?” Tuni said, “I’ll take rice if you sting the elephant.” The mosquito said, “Is that all? No problem, my dear! I’ll go at once. Let me see how

tough is the elephant's skin." He gave a call to all the mosquitoes of all the countries and said, "Come, my brothers! We'll see how thick the elephant's skin is." Then—"ping, ping, ping, ping"—all the mosquitoes of all the countries—father and son, brothers and friends — mustered strong and went forth to sting the elephant. The sky was overcast with mosquitoes, a veil of mosquitoes covered the sun. A storm, raised from the wings of the mosquitoes, raged all over the country. "Ping - Ping - Ping - Ping" – the hearts of all fluttered at that terrible sound.

Then

The elephant said, "I'll suck the sea."

The sea said, "I'll put out the fire."

The fire said, "Im going to burn the stick."

The stick said, "I'll thrash the cat."

The cat said, "I'll kill the rat."

The rat said, "I'll cut the king's belly."

The king said, "I' ll chop off the barber's hand."

The barber came with folded hands and said crying, "Save me,

Tuni dear, come, I'll open your boil."

Then Tunis' s boil was cured. She was very happy and again started singing and dancing--

"Sing a song of ting-a-ling, ping-a-ping,

Tumpty-tum, bumpty-bum, tra-la-la-la-la."

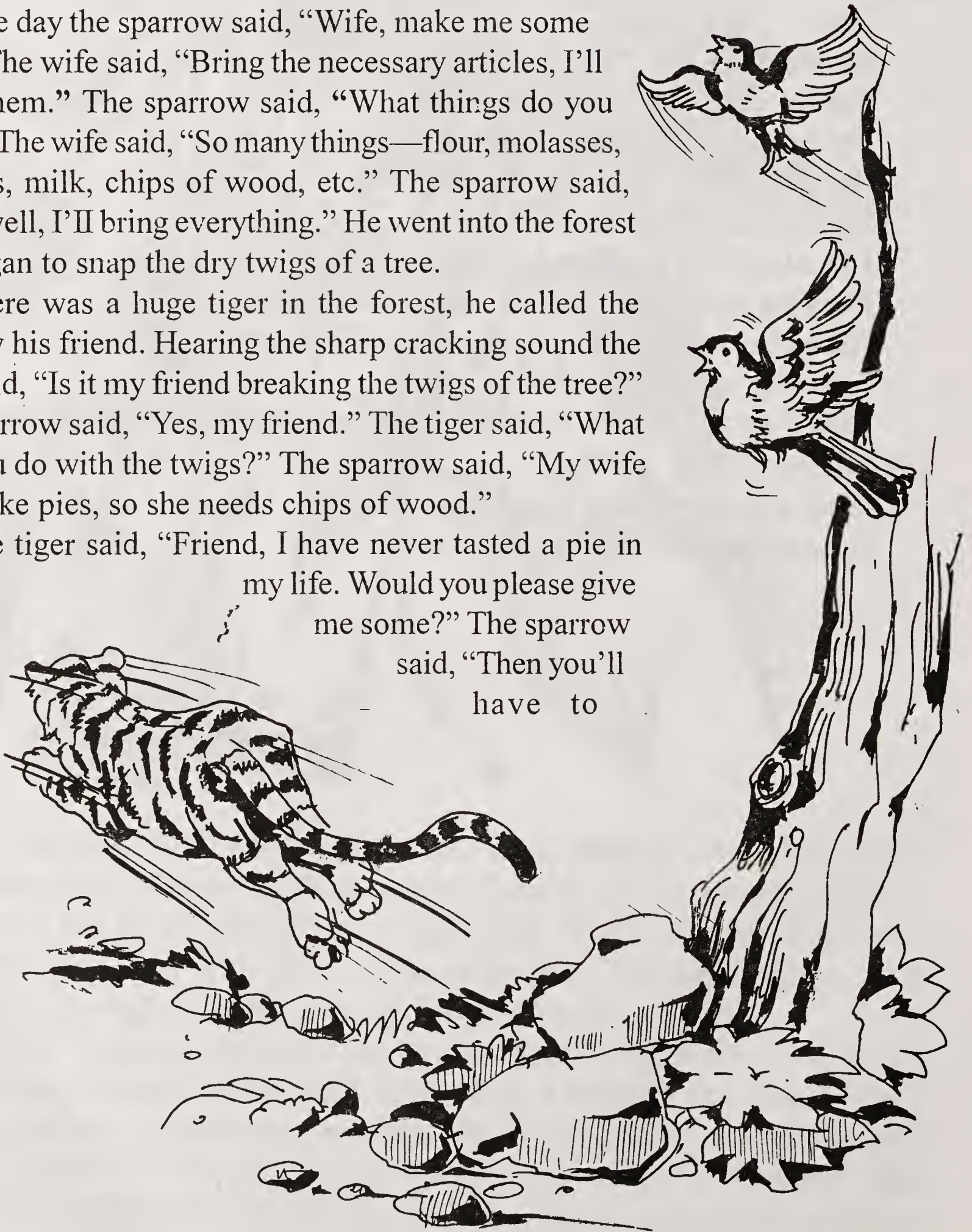
THE SPARROW AND THE TIGER

THERE was an earthen pot hanging at the corner of a cottage. A sparrow and his wife made it their home.

One day the sparrow said, "Wife, make me some pies." The wife said, "Bring the necessary articles, I'll make them." The sparrow said, "What things do you need?" The wife said, "So many things—flour, molasses, bananas, milk, chips of wood, etc." The sparrow said, "Very well, I'll bring everything." He went into the forest and began to snap the dry twigs of a tree.

There was a huge tiger in the forest, he called the sparrow his friend. Hearing the sharp cracking sound the tiger said, "Is it my friend breaking the twigs of the tree?" The sparrow said, "Yes, my friend." The tiger said, "What will you do with the twigs?" The sparrow said, "My wife will make pies, so she needs chips of wood."

The tiger said, "Friend, I have never tasted a pie in my life. Would you please give me some?" The sparrow said, "Then you'll have to



fetch all the things for me.” The tiger said, “What particular things do you want?” The sparrow said, “I want flour, molasses, bananas, milk, butter oil, a pot and twigs.” The tiger said, “Don’t worry ! Go back, I’ll fetch everything for you.” The sparrow returned home.

The tiger swinging his body to and fro went to the market in a leisurely manner. He had only to roar out once — “H-a-u-m.” The shopkeepers raised a hue and cry, “Oh, Lord! There’s a tiger here. Run, run for your life.” And ran away leaving their shops. Then the tiger hunted for flour, molasses, bananas, butter oil, milk, earthen pot and wood in all the shops and took them to the sparrow’s house. With these, the sparrow’s wife made delicious pies and the two of them had their fill. Then they kept some pies on a leaf on the ground and they themselves sat down quietly inside the pot.

The tiger came, he saw the pies and sat down to eat them. He put one pie into his mouth and said, “Ah, it’s delicious !” He put another one *into his* mouth and said, “No, this one is not so good. It has been made only with flour.” He put another one into his mouth and said, “Fie ! There are only chaffs and ashes in it. What a nasty thing has my sparrow friend fed me with !” Then he put another pie into his mouth and said, “Tut! Tut! What a bad smell it has ! Is there cow-dung in it? That sparrow is a scoundrel, indeed !!”

In the meantime some amusing incident happened. The sparrow sitting in the earthen pot twisted his mouth and nose and said, “Wife, I’ll sneeze.” The wife in a flurry said, “Stop it. This is no time for sneezing. We shall be in a tight corner.” The sparrow kept quiet. But after a while, again puckering his features, he was about to sneeze. The wife tried her best to stop him, but all her efforts proved fruitless.

The tiger ate a pie with a nasty taste and spat it out, “This is made only with cow-dung, nothing else has been used. If I can somehow get hold of that wicked sparrow, I’ll tear him up and chew the flesh *with* relish.” Taking another pie he had just thrown it out of his mouth then — ‘Atishoo’ — sneezed the sparrow *with* a loud noise. At this sound the tiger was startled and was about to jump when the string tying up the pot snapped and the sparrow-couple dropped on the tiger’s neck. The tiger was at a loss to understand whether a thunder had struck or the sky had come down. He was terribly afraid and folding up his tail he ran for life. He did not stop until he reached home.

THE WICKED TIGER

THERE was a very big tiger in an iron cage by the side of the main gate of the king's palace. With folded hands he used to beg all the people who passed by the king's palace, "Oh, big brother ! Please open the door of the cage once for all." Hearing this they would say, "Indeed ! We'll open the door and immediately you will break our neck, won't you ?"

Once a big party was being held in the king's palace. Renowned scholars being invited came there in a stream. One Brahmin among them had a very innocent appearance. The tiger again and again bowed down before him and paid homage. The Brahmin said, "Ah, this tiger is very good. What do you want, my son?"

With folded hands the tiger said, "Please, sir, please open the door of this cage. I bow at your feet." The Brahmin was a good-hearted fellow. So at the words of the tiger he opened the door of the cage without delay. Then the wicked tiger came out laughing and said, "Oh, Brahmin ! I shall now eat you up." Anybody else would have run away, but the Brahmin did not know how to run. He was terribly upset and said, "Never heard of such a thing! I helped you and you now tell me that you will eat me up ! Is it proper to act thus?" The tiger said, "Of course! Everybody acts in this manner."

The Brahmin said, "Never ! Let's have the opinion of three witnesses. Let's hear what they say."

The tiger said, "Well, let us go. If the witnesses are of the same opinion with you, I'll let you go. But if they support me, I'll eat you up."

Both of them went to the field in search of witness. The cultivators leave a high ridge of land between two plots to make a path. The Brahmin showed him such a ridge of land and said, "This is one of my witnesses." The tiger said, "Very well, then ask him and let us hear what he has to say." The Brahmin said, "Oh, strip of land between the plots ! Just answer me. If I do somebody any good, will he do any harm to me in return?" The strip of land said, "Yes, he certainly does that. Look at me. I lie between the plots of two cultivators and help them a lot. One cannot encroach into the other's land, the water does not run from one plot to another. I do a lot of good to them but the scoundrels cut me with their spades and extend the area of their plots."

The tiger said, "Have you heard, Brahmin, whether the beneficiary harms the benefactor or not ?" The Brahmin said, "Wait, wait, I have still got two more witnesses." The tiger said, "Well let us go." There was a banyan tree in the middle

of the field. The Brahmin chose the tree as one of his witnesses. The tiger said, "Ask him, let us hear what he has to say." The Brahmin said, "Hallo, banyan tree! You are far advanced in age and have lots of experiences. Just tell me whether anyone does harm to his benefactor." The banyan tree said, "That is the very thing that a person does before anything else. Those people who sat under me and became cool have poked me mercilessly to bring out gum. Again they have torn off my leaves to put that gum. That's not enough. Having broken one of my branches they are now going away." The tiger said, "What is he saying, Brahmin?" Then the Brahmin was at a loss and did not know what to say.

Just at that time, a fox was going along that way. The Brahmin said, "Here goes another witness of mine. Let me hear what he says." Then he called the fox and said, "O learned fox! Wait for a moment. You are my witness." The fox stopped but was not willing to go near. From a safe distance he said, "Strange !! How am I your witness?" The Brahmin said, "Tell me, son, whether any person ever does harm to his benefactor." "Well, I may answer your question if I know fully well who has helped whom and who has harmed whom", the fox said. The Brahmin said, "The tiger was in a cage and I was going along the path." Hearing this the fox said, "It's beyond my comprehension. I can't say anything before I see the cage and that path." So all of them had to go again near the cage.

The fox wandered around that cage for a considerable period of time. Then he said, "Now I understand everything about this cage and this path. Now tell me what, happened." The Brahmin said, "The tiger was in that cage and I was going along that path." At once the fox stopped him and said, "Wait, wait, wait ! Don't be in such a haste; first of all, let me take in this much. What did you say ? The tiger was your Brahmin and the path was running through that cage?"

The tiger laughed aloud at his words and said, "Be off, you ass, the tiger was in the cage and the Brahmin was going along the path." The fox said, "Wait, wait, let me see! The Brahmin was in the cage and the tiger was going along the path." The tiger said, "Oh, you fool, that is not the case. The tiger was in the cage and the Brahmin was going along the path." The fox said, "Well, it's a difficult job. I'm totally in the dark. What did you say ? The tiger was inside the Brahmin and the cage was moving along the road?"

The tiger said, "I haven't ever seen a bigger fool than you. Listen, you lout, the tiger was inside the cage and the Brahmin was going along the path." Then the fox scratched his head and said, "No ! It is not for me to make head or tail of such a difficult problem." By that time the tiger flared up. He rebuked him severely and said, "You will have to understand. See—I was in this cage—look—just like this." While saying this the tiger entered into the cage and the next moment the fox promptly shut the door of the cage and put the latch on. Then the fox said to

the Brahmin, "Oh, Brahmin! Now everything is perfectly clear to me. If you want me as a witness then I'll advise you, never to do good to wicked people. So, victory for uncle, Tiger! Now, hurry up, the feast in the palace is still going on." Saying this the fox went to the forest and the Brahmin went to enjoy the feast.

TIGER, THE BRIDEGROOM

THERE was a poor Brahmin. He had a wife and a young daughter but had nothing to feed them. He begged with great hardship but the food he used to get was not enough even for one meal. That too was not available everyday.



One day the young girl went to a neighbour's house and saw that rice-pudding had been prepared there and the boys were eating it with relish. She was seized with a strong desire to eat rice-pudding. She went back home and said to her mother, "Mother, please make rice-pudding for me." Hearing this her mother began to cry. How could she prepare rice-pudding when boiled rice was scarce?

The Brahmin came back from begging and found his wife weeping. "Why are you crying?" he said, "What's the matter?" His wife said, "Your daughter wants to eat rice-pudding. Where shall I get it? That's why I'm crying." The Brahmin said, "Don't cry. I'll see what I can do." He left home at once.

There was a very good zaminder in that village. When he came to know that the Brahmin's daughter had wanted to eat rice-pudding, he gave him fine rice of very good quality, some milk and some spices. The Brahmin, being highly pleased, blessed the zaminder and came rushing to his house. He said to his wife, "Here you are, I have brought everything needed for making rice-pudding." His wife was a very good woman. She could cook very well, the taste of her cooking was unique. When she started cooking the rice-pudding, all the people in the neighbourhood *were* attracted by the aroma.

A crow attracted by the delicious smell of the rice-pudding, said, "Ah-h! I must taste such a palatable dish." He flew over to the roof of the Brahmin's house. He remained there quietly for a considerable period of time. When there was some sort of sound in the kitchen he said, "Now ! The cooking is finished." After a while hearing some more sound the crow said, "Now, it is being served." Then some moments passed by, the crow hearing some more sound again said, "Oh, they are now eating it."

The Brahmin and his daughter were then actually having their meal. The rice-pudding was so delicious that the two of them nearly finished all of it. There was only a little left for the Brahmin's wife. When she finished her meal there was not even the slightest trace of the rice-pudding left on the dish or the pot. The crow had been waiting and waiting, but alas ! There was nothing for him to eat, then he was very angry. He said within himself, "They have cheated me in such a manner !! I must take revenge."

There was a big forest near the Brahmin's house. A big tiger lived in that forest. The crow hit upon a plan, He went to the tiger and said, "Oh respected tiger ! Our Brahmin over there has a beautiful daughter. You are such a handsome bride-groom! If you marry her, it will be a grand match." The tiger said, "Who will settle the marriage? If I go to propose they will run away." The crow said, "You needn't do anything, I'm doing everything needful. You just send some food for them." The tiger said, "Very well, I'll go to the village and kill a dog, then

I shall leave it in the Brahmin's house." Hearing this the crow bit his tongue and said, "No, no. They won't eat dogs, You have a lemon tree in your house, send them some lemons from that tree. I'll myself take the lemons to the Brahmin."

Then he took some lemons and gave them to the Brahmin. He came back and said, "Respected tiger, they have been very glad getting the lemons. If you continue to give them lemons for some days they will certainly give their daughter in marriage to you." Hearing this the tiger rolled over and over again on the ground in wild joy. In this way the crow took the lemons everyday and coming back said to the tiger, "They will marry their daughter to you."

It was, in fact, a falsehood but the tiger was confident that the Brahmin would marry his daughter to him. Then, one day, the tiger said, "Why ! The lemons are exhausted. When'll the marriage take place?" The crow said, "The marriage will certainly take place. Whenever you wish, you will get married." The tiger said, "Then tell them if they don't make arrangement for the marriage, I'll chew up all of them."

That was the real intention of the crow. Immediately he went to the Brahmin's house and said, "Do you hear me? Tomorrow the tiger will come to marry your daughter at night. If you stand in the way he will grind all of you between his teeth." Hearing this the Brahmin and his wife struck their breast in agony and bewailed in a loud voice. The villagers ran to them and said, "What's wrong?" The Brahmin said crying, "Tomorrow the tiger will come to marry my daughter. If we refuse he will eat all of us." The villagers said, "Is it so? Let him come. We'll see how the rogue marries and how he eats you all on refusal. Don't be afraid, we'll settle everything for you."

Saying this they sent a message to the tiger, "Oh, Mr. Tiger, where shall we get such a bridegroom as you? Dress yourself in a befitting manner, take your seat in the centre of the assembly, enjoy the songs and music, have sumptuous meal, then, after getting married, you may leave."

Then they set up three hundred ovens on the Brahmin's yard and placed three hundred cauldrons of oil on them to boil. They spread out a lovely bed on the well. Then they started a noisy scene, beating the drums. On hearing the pandemonium the tiger said, "There ! The merriments are going on, on the occasion of my marriage." Without delay he put on his best dress, tied a turban on *his* head and came to the Brahmin's house, dancing all the way. When he reached there the villagers shouted out, "The bridegroom has arrived. Beat the drums." They led the tiger to the bed spread out on the well.

No sooner had the tiger sprung to take the seat on the bed than—"Gr-r-o-u-g-h"—down went he into the well and simultaneously they poured the boiling oil

in the three hundred pots and the fire in the three hundred ovens into the well. Then in a jiffy the foolish tiger was burnt to ashes and the danger of the Brahmins was averted.

The crow was sitting on the roof of the Brahmin's house to enjoy the fun. The boys in the neighbourhood pelted stones at him and broke his head.

THE FOOLISH CROCODILE

THE crocodile and the fox made up their minds to engage themselves jointly in cultivation. What would they cultivate ? They decided to grow potatoes. Potatoes grow under the soil. The plants grow over the soil. These are practically of no use. The foolish crocodile was not aware of this fact. He had the idea that the potatoes were the fruits of the potato plants.

So intending to deceive the fox he said, "I'll have the top portion of the plants and you will get the lower part." Hearing this the fox smiled and said, "Let it be so." When the potatoes were ready the crocodile cut off the upper part of the plants and took them home. Then he found that there was not a single potato. He went to the field and found that the fox had dug out all the potatoes. The crocodile thought, "Well, well !! I've been made a fool. Next time, I'll see."

Next time they cultivated paddy. The crocodile was determined not to be cheated again by the fox. So, in the very beginning he said, "Look here, brother, this time I'll not have the upper portion but I must have the lower portion of the crop." Hearing this the fox smiled and said, "Well, I have no objection." When the paddy was ripe the fox reaped the harvest and took away the tops of the paddy plants. The crocodile had remained smug and contented. He had been sure that he would dig the soil and have all the paddy. Alas! Luck was against him. He dug the soil and found nothing. The only profit that he earned was the straw that was left.

Then the crocodile became furious and said, "Wait; you the son of a vixen, I'll teach you a lesson. This time I shall not allow you to take away the tops. I'll fetch all the tops." They started cultivating sugar-canes. The crocodile was determined to have the tops at any cost. So the fox gave him the tops, himself took away all the sugar-canes and chewed them to his heart's content. The crocodile brought home the tops of the sugar-canes, chewed them and found that they were salty and devoid of sweet taste. Then being angry he threw away the sugar-canes and said, "I shall never again cultivate anything with you, you are a cheat."

THE LEARNED FOX

THE crocodile from his past experiences knew that it was impossible for him to cope with the fox. Then he thought, "He is learned, so he is able to cheat me in so many ways. I am illiterate so I can't cope with him." Pondering over the problem for a long time he at last came to the decision that he would engage the learned fox to educate his seven sons.



Next day he went to the fox's den with his seven kids. The fox was then sitting inside a hole and eating crabs. The crocodile called him, "O learned fox ! Are you in ?" The fox came out and said, "Well, brother ! What's in your mind ?" The crocodile said, "Brother ! I have brought my kiddies to you. If they remain illiterate, they will never be able to earn their livelihood. Please, brother, make them learned." The fox said, "You needn't say more. I'll make your seven kids well-versed in seven days." The crocodile being very glad, went back leaving behind his sons.



Then the fox took one of them in a covert place and said,

“Read, my son,
Anna Bile and Canna Dile,
How do you like
The son of a crocodile ?”

Saying this he twisted the neck of one of the kids and ate him up. Next day, when the crocodile came the fox brought the kiddies out of the burrow and showed them to him one after another. He showed the six kids, one by one, six times and the sixth once again. The foolish crocodile could not see through his tricks, he thought that he had seen his seven kids. When he left, the fox immediately took another kid in a covert place and said,

“Read, my son,
Anna Bile and Canna Dile,
D’ye like a weeny crocodile ?”

Saying this, he twisted its neck and ate him up. Next day the crocodile came to see his kids. The fox brought out five kiddies, one at a time, showed them to the crocodile five times and then showed him the last one twice again. Delighted, the crocodile went away. Then the fox repeated the performance and ate up another kid.

In this way he would eat one kid every day and when the crocodile came he threw dust into his eyes. At last when only one kid was left, he satisfied the crocodile by showing the remaining kid for seven times. When the crocodile went away, the last one also was gobbled up by the fox. Not a single one survived. Then the she-fox said, “What to do now ? What will you show the crocodile when he comes? If he doesn’t find his kids he will surely gobble us up.” The fox said, “How on earth will he find us? The forest on the other side of the river is very big, let’s go there. Then the crocodile will never find us out.” Saying this the fox left the den with his wife.

After some time the crocodile came there. He repeatedly called out, “Hey, the learned fox ! Hey, the learned fox!” But he got no response. Then he looked outside and inside the hole but there was no trace of either the he-fox or the she-fox, only the bones of the kiddies were lying about here and there.

The crocodile became furious. He rushed about hither and thither in search of the fox. Then at last he went to the side of the river, “Lo ! There ! There goes the fox with his wife swimming across the river.” He shouted out, “Wait, you scoundrel !” And jumped into the river. Nobody can swim as fast as the crocodile under the water. In the twinkling of an eye he caught hold of one of the fox’s hind legs with his teeth. The fox had just placed his front legs on the bank, his wife had already climbed on to the bank. As soon as the crocodile gripped his legs he

called his wife and said, "Darling ! Somebody is pulling my stick. He will take away the stick, I'm afraid." Hearing this the crocodile thought, "What ill-luck ! I've caught hold of his stick inadvertently instead of his leg ! Let me release the stick and catch hold of his leg." Accordingly he set the leg free and immediately the fox jumped on to the bank and ran for life. Who would be able to catch him if once he could enter into the forest?

After that the crocodile constantly went on looking for the fox. But the fox was very cunning, so he could not be caught. Then the crocodile hit upon a plan. One day he lay down on the bank stretching out his feet like one dead. The fox and his wife came there to eat crabs and found the crocodile in that state. Then the she- fox said, "He's dead. Let's have a feast on him." The fox said, "Wait a bit. First of all, let me watch him for a while." Saying this he went nearer to the crocodile and said, "No, he is stone-dead. We don't eat such a crocodile as stark dead as he is. We eat those that move a little."

Hearing this the crocodile thought, "Let me stir a little, otherwise he won't come to eat me." So he began to move the end of his tail slightly. The fox noticed it and said to his wife, "Just see, he is moving his tail and you say that he is dead!" After that who would make them stay there?

Then the crocodile said, "What a dirty trick he played with me ! Well, next time I'll teach him a lesson."

The fox used to come to drink water at a certain spot regularly. The crocodile noticed that and hid himself there. He thought that as soon as the fox would come to drink water he would gobble him up. That very day the fox came and noticed that there was not a single fish at that spot though all the other days lots of fishes would move about there. The fox thought, "Well ! Well ! Well ! Where have all the fishes gone today ? Yes, now I understand, here the crocodile is lying in wait." He said aloud, "Here the water is too clear. The water is not worth drinking if it isn't a bit muddy. Come, wife, let's go somewhere else." On hearing this the crocodile started to make the water muddy and the fox ran off, laughing all the way.

Another day the fox came to eat crabs. The crocodile had already been sitting there quietly. The fox had a premonition and said, "There are no crabs here or I would have seen a few floating about." Immediately the crocodile floated the end of his tail in the water. So the fox did not go down. Thus, repeatedly, being made a fool by the fox, the crocodile was filled with shame. How could he show his face to others ? So he went back home and remained there.

THE FOX, A WITNESS

A merchant was going to sell a horse. On the way he felt very sleepy. He tied up the horse with a tree and fell asleep under that tree. In the meantime a thief came and was about to run away with the horse. The merchant woke up at the sound of the horse's foot-steps and said, "Well, brother, where are you going with my horse ?" At this the thief flared up and said, "Which is your horse ?" The merchant was surprised and said, "How's that ? You are going away with my horse and still you say which one is my horse !" The wicked thief put on a long face and said, "Beware! Don't call my horse yours." The merchant said, "What ! I brought the horse from my house and now you are saying that it is yours !!" The thief said, "Is it so ? This horse is a kid just now born of this tree of mine. You just try to be reasonable or you will be in trouble."

Then the merchant went to the king to complain against the thief, "Your Majesty, I had been fast asleep, tying up my horse with a tree when that rogue came up and was sneaking away with my horse." The king called the thief and said, "Hey! Why were you going to steal his horse?" The thief folded his hands and said, "I appeal to Your Majesty ! This can never be his horse. This is the offspring of my tree. As soon as it was delivered I was taking it away and that cad waking up claimed that it was his horse. It's all a bundle of lies." The king said to the merchant, "This is disgraceful. The horse was born of the tree and you are now saying that it is your horse ! You are a very wicked person. Leave this place at once." Saying this the king gave the horse to the thief.

The poor merchant went homewards in deep distress. Going a little distance he met a fox. The fox saw that the merchant was crying. He asked, "What is it brother? Why are you so depressed? What's the matter?" The merchant said, "Oh, brother! What's the use of wasting words ? My horse has been stolen by a thief. I went to complain to the king and the thief said that it was a kid of his tree. Hearing this the king gave the horse to the thief." The fox said, "Well, can you do something ?" The merchant said, "What is it ?" The fox said, "Go back again to the king and tell him, "Your Majesty, I have a witness, I can bring him with me if there's no dog in your house."

Then the merchant again went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, I have a witness, he is afraid of your dogs and dares not come to your house. If you will be so kind as to order the dogs to be driven out, I may bring my witness." Hearing this, the king gave orders to drive out all the dogs, and said, "Well, now let your

witness appear.” The merchant repeated the words to the fox and the fox came to the king’s court with uneven steps and with his eyes shut. Coming there he leaned against the wall and began to doze. The king being amused at the sight said to him laughing, “Is it the learned fox ? Why are you sleeping !” The fox blinking his half-closed lids said, “Your Majesty, yesterday I sat up the whole night eating fish, so I am now feeling drowsy.” The king said, “Where did you get so many fish ?” The fox said, “Yesterday a fire broke out in the river and all the fish came up to the bank. All of us had a feast throughout the night — wasn’t it rather impossible for us to consume all !!”



Hearing this the king began to laugh wildly, a little more of it and he would have certainly burst. At last with great effort he controlled himself and said, “I haven’t heard such an impossible story in all my life. The water is on fire, is it ever possible? These are the meaningless babblings of an insane person.” Then the fox said, “Your Majesty, did you ever hear that the tree gives birth to a horse ?

If this is not the babbling of an insane person, where's the harm in my words ? At his words the king was in a dilemma. After much deliberation he at last said, "That's it, You are right. How can a tree give birth to a horse ? That scoundrel must be a thief." Immediately the king ordered, "Go and fasten him with ropes and bring him here." Hardly had the words left his mouth when ten guards went forth and brought the thief, all bound up. The king said, "Beat the scoundrel fifty times with a shoe." At once the guards began to beat him severely on his back with their slippers. The wicked fellow had been beaten only twenty-five times with the shoes when he began to shout, "I'm done! I'm finished! I am bringing back the horse. Never shall I do the same thing again." But who cared to give ear to his shoutings ? When he had been beaten fifty times with the shoe, the king said, "Go at once and bring the horse, or you will be beaten with a shoe fifty times more."

The thief ran fast and brought the horse back. Then he was made to twist his own nose and ears, his head was shaven clean and whey was poured on it. Then the wretched fellow was driven out of the country. The merchant got back his horse and showered blessings on the fox.

THE FOX-CUBS WHO FED ON TIGERS

A fox and his wife had three cubs but they had no shelter for the cubs. They thought, "Where shall we keep the cubs ? If we do not find a roof over their head they will get wet in the rain and die." Then they searched frantically for a hole and found one, but all around the hole there were only the foot-prints of a tiger. The wife said, "Oh, dear ! This is a tiger's den. How will you live here ?" The fox said, "We have spared no pains to find one but no other hole is available. We shall have to stay here." The she-fox said, "What will happen, if the tiger comes ?" The fox said, "Then you'll have to pinch the cubs hard. They will cry



and I'll ask you why they are crying; you will say that they want to eat tigers." Hearing this the wife said, "Now I understand. Let it be so." Being very happy she entered into the hole. Thence-forward they began to stay in that hole.

Days passed by. At last, one day they saw that a tiger was coming. Immediately, the she-fox pinched her cubs hard. How they howled ! The fox then asked in a very thick and raucous voice, "Why are the children crying ?" The wife answered in the same unpleasant voice, "They want to eat a tiger, that's why they are crying."

The tiger was coming towards the hole. "They want to eat a tiger" — Hearing this he got frightened and stopped. He thought, "Good heavens ! Who are these creatures in my den, I wonder ? They are certainly ogres, otherwise why do their children want to eat a tiger ?" Just then the fox said, "Where shall I get more tigers? I have already fed them with all the tigers available here." The she-fox said, "What's the good of saying this ? Bring one by any means or they will go on howling." The fox said, "Wait ! Wait ! Wait ! There I see a tiger coming. Give my *Jhaupang*, quick, I'll *vautang* him." There are no such things as *Jhaupang* or *vautang*, those were only his tricks. But at the mention of those two strange words there was a terrible flutter in the tiger's heart. He thought, "My goodness ! Let me run away. I don't know what they will be doing with.....er.....heaven knows what." Saying this he did not stop there even for a while. The fox saw that with long strides he was rushing off through the bushes and woods. Then with a long sigh of relief the fox and his wife said, "Thank God, the danger is over." The tiger was still running very fast, he had never run so fast before.

A monkey from the top of a tree saw him rushing on. He was astonished and thought within himself, "Well, the tiger is running so fast ! It's a matter not to be ignored. Something terrible must have happened." He called the tiger and said, "Hallo, brother tiger ! What's up ? Why are you running away in such a manner !!" The tiger was out of breath, and was panting. He said, "Am I running away of my own accord ? If I hadn't they would have eaten me up." The monkey said, "Strange! I can't dream of any living creature who could eat you. I can't believe it." The tiger said, "Well, sonnie, I would like to see what you would do if you had been there. Everybody can make such comments from a safe distance." The monkey said, "If I would have been there then I could have convinced you that there is nothing there. You are a fool, so you have been seized with terror without any rhyme or reason."

At these words the tiger grew angry and said, "Is it so ? Am I a fool ? You are very clever, aren't you ? Come with me if you have the guts." The monkey said, "Of course, I will, if you only carry me on your back." The tiger said, "Agreed. I'll carry you on my back." Saying this he carried the monkey on his back and again proceeded towards the hole.

The fox and his wife had just made their cubs quiet and sat down when they saw that the tiger was returning with a monkey on his back. The she-fox ran in a hurry and began to pinch the cubs. The cubs too started howling like ghosts. Then the fox in the same tone said, "Stop it ! Don't you shout, you will fall ill." The she-fox said, "I told you just now that they will not stop untill and unless you bring a tiger for their food." The fox said, "I asked their maternal uncle to fetch a tiger. He will come soon. Stop crying." Then after a pause he again said, "Here ! Here your monkey-uncle comes with a tiger. Don't cry and longer. Quick, bring my *jhaupang*, I'll *vautang* him."

So long the monkey had courage in his heart. But after hearing about 'Jhaupang' and 'vautang' he could no longer remain sitting. He jumped upon a tree and disappeared in the twinkling of an eye. Should I speak of the tiger? From there he ran for life for two days at a stretch. Thenceforward the fox and his family had no other trouble, they passed their days happily in the tiger's den.

THE FRUIT OF SUGAR-CANE

THE learned fox was very fond of sugar-canes. So everyday he used to go and eat sugar-canes. One day, while going to the field he caught sight of a hornet's nest. He had never seen a hornet's nest before. He thought that it was the fruit of sugar-cane. The fox was a scholar, so he called the sugar-cane, 'Ikshu', the field, 'kshetra' and the stick, 'Danda'. 'Ikshu', 'Kshetra' and 'Danda' are the polished version in Bengali of sugar-cane, field and stick respectively.

Seeking the hornet's nest he said, "Aha ! Sugar-cane is itself very delicious. How sweet its fruit must be !" Thinking so, no sooner had he gone to eat the nest than the hornets came out of the nest and showed him the greatest fun of his life. The fox ran about in fear of life and kept on saying, "I will never again go to the field of 'Ikshu' (sugar-cane)."

After a while he got rid of the hornets. Then he thought, "Everyday I go to the field, such a thing has never happened to me. I was in danger when I went to taste the fruit." Thinking so he began to say, "Even if I go to the sugar-cane field I will never again eat the fruit." He repeated the same words for two days.

When the pain subsided he thought, "There were surely fleas in that particular fruit, I had been stung by them. They would have gone out if I had stirred the fruit. Then it would have been an easy job to eat it. The fruit must be very tasty. Then why shouldn't I have a bite at the fruit? This time I'll not forget to drive away the fleas before I eat it." Then he started saying, "If I want to taste the fruit I must first of all stir it with a stick." Saying this he went to the sugar-cane field and stirred the nest with a stick. What a terrible confusion ! The hornets rushed out of the nest in a body, stung him and left him half-dead. From that time, he never again dreamed of eating the fruit of 'Ikshu' or sugar-cane.

THE FOX INSIDE AN ELEPHANT

THE largest and the best and the most beautiful of all the king's elephants was the principal elephant. The king used to ride on that elephant and he loved him very much.

One day the elephant died. The king mourned his death for some time and then said, "Go and throw him away." Five hundred men tied up his legs with thick ropes and dragged him away and left him in the field.

A fox lived near that field. He could not afford to have full meals for a long time. When he saw the dead elephant in the field he was full of joy and began to eat him. He was so hungry that while eating he entered into the elephant's belly, even then his hunger was not satisfied. In this way two days passed by. He still went on eating, sitting inside the elephant's belly.

Meanwhile because of the sunshine the skin of the elephant dried up and the fox, too, became fatter on account of over-eating. He tried hard to get out of the elephant's belly, but all his efforts were in vain. What to do now?

At that time three cultivators were going along that road. Seeing them he hit upon a plan. He called them from the depth of the elephant's belly and said, "Oh, my brothers ! Can you deliver a message to the king? I'll stand up if butter oil from fifty pots is applied to my belly."

The cultivators were very much astonished. They said among themselves, "Listen to the elephant. Let's go and give the message to the king." They ran to the king and said, "O king, your dead elephant says that he will again stand up if butter oil from fifty pots is applied to his belly. Immediately send fifty pots of butter oil."

The king was overwhelmed with joy. The king said, "If my elephant survives, what do I bother for fifty pots of butter oil ?" At once thousand porters went to the field with thousand pots of butter oil. The only words that could be heard in all corners were "Bring the butter oil." "Pour the butter oil."

After seven days the fox found that the elephant's skin had become much softer and the cavity of his belly had extended. He could come out at his own sweet will. Then he called all of the men and said, "Brothers, now I shall get up. You just step aside, my head may reel and I may tumble down upon you any moment." Then there was a great confusion. Everybody was pushing everybody else and saying, "Hey, you lout ! Move away, quick ! The elephant is getting up, he may fall on your shoulder any moment."



After that nobody had the courage to stand there. They ran away leaving behind the pots of butter oil and never looked back to see whether the elephant had stirred or remained lying there. Seeing this the fox thought, "Let me run away at this opportune moment." He came out of the elephant's belly without delay and ran for his life.

MAJANTALI SARKAR

THERE were two cats in a village. One of them lived in a milkman's house. He used to feed on with curd, casein, butter and cream. The other lived in a fisherman's house. He was constantly beaten up and kicked. the milkman's cat was fat, he would go about with his chest puffed up. The fisherman's cat was nothing but skin and bone. While moving about unsteadily he would ponder how he would become fat like the milkman's cat. "Brother, come to my house today as an invited guest," he, one day said to the milkman's cat. All that he had uttered was falsehood. He could not procure food for himself, how would he feed others? He thought, "The milkman's cat will be beaten to death on his arrival. Then I shall live in the milkman's house in great comfort."

The thought was translated into action. As soon as the milkman's cat came to the fisherman's house the fisherman said, "There! The milkman's cat, a sneaking thief who feeds on milk and curd, has come. He will eat up all our fish. Give the rogue a good thrashing." Saying this they beat him so mercilessly that the poor thing breathed his last.

The emaciated cat knew the result beforehand. He went to the milkman's house. He ate condensed milk and cream to his heart's content and within a few days he became fat. Then he stopped speaking with other cats and if asked his name he would say, "My name is Majantali Sarkar."

One day Majantali Sarkar went out for a walk with a bundle of papers and a pen. While strolling about he went into the forest and saw three tiger-cubs playing there. He made a great show of temper and said, "Hey ! Pay your taxes." The cubs got frightened at the sight of paper and pen and at his bad temper. They ran off to their mother and said, "Mum, come here quickly. Look, somebody has come and is saying something." Hearing them the tigress came out and said, "Who are you? Where have you come from ? What do you want?" Majantali said, "I am the king's bailiff, my name is Majantali Sarkar. You live in our king's landed property. Who will pay the tax ? Better give it to me." The tigress said, "We know nothing about tax. We only live in the forest and eat up anybody who comes here. You rather wait a bit, let the tiger return." Then Majantali sat under a tall tree and peeped about hither and thither. After a while he saw—there ! The tiger was coming. Then leaving aside his paper and pen he promptly climbed at the top of the tree.

As soon as the tiger came the tigress told him everything. The tiger was furious.

He roared like thunder and said, "Where is that scoundrel gone ? I'll immediately break his neck." Majantali said from the top of the tree, "Hey, you tiger! Won't you pay the tax? Come, come." At once the tiger's face was contorted with violent rage. "H-a-u-m!" He roared and sprang upon the tree. But what's the use of getting up? Would he be ever able to catch hold of Majantali? Majantali was a small, light animal. He had got high up on a thin branch. It was really impossible for such a huge creature as the tiger to reach him. Having failed he was fuming with rage and gave a jump. He slipped and fell down. While falling down his head was caught between two branches. He broke his neck and breathed his last.

Seeing this Majantali hurried down the tree, scratched his nose at three or four places and called out to the tigress, "Just see what I have done. He has paid for his impertinence."



All these happenings filled the tigress with terror. She folded her hands and said, "For heaven's sake, Mr. Majantali, please don't kill us. We will be at

your command.” Majantali said, “Very well, serve me well and make excellent arrangements for my meals.”

Thenceforward, Majantali lived in the tigress’ den and had sumptuous food to eat. He would wander about ridding on the back of the cubs who shook in fear of him and took him for a very important person.

One day the tigress with folded hands said, “Mr. Majantali, there are only small animals in this forest, you don’t have your fill, I’m afraid. There is a big forest with very big animals on the other side of the river. Let’s go there.” Majantali said, “Right, let’s go on to the other side.” The tigress with her cubs crossed the river in a moment. Where was Majantali? The tigress and her cubs looked for him everywhere and lo ! He was panting for breath in a midstream. He was driven far away by the current and his life was at stake while he was rolling in the waves.

Majantali knew it for certain that more waves would bring about his end. Luckily at the nick of the moment one of the cubs was fast enough to pull him to the bank, Otherwise that would have been the end of him. But Majantali Sarkar didn’t allow them to know it. Reaching on the shore he rolled his eyes and was about to slap the cub and the abuses that he showered on him were unaccountable. Then he said, “Worthless imbecile, look what you have done ! I was preparing a list and you pulled me up before it was finished ! My accounts are all in a confused state! I was just counting how many waves and fishes there are and how much water the river contains, and like a gaping fool you had to be there and muddle up everything. I’ll teach you a lesson if I fail to place the accounts before the king.” Hearing this the tigress with folded hands appeared before him and said, “Mr. Majantali, please pardon the misdeed for once. He is a fool. He has no education, so he has done what he did not intend to do.” Majantali said, “Well, he is pardoned for this time. Be careful! Do not let him repeat the same mistake, mind you !” Saying this, Majantali looked for sunshine to dry his wet body.

The sunrays cannot easily enter through the thick foliages of a deep forest. One would have to climb at the top of a tall tree to find sunshine. Majantali climbed at the top of a tree and saw that the carcass of a huge buffalo was lying in the middle of the field. Then he promptly went to it and scratched and bit it. Then he said to the tigress, “Go to the field, hurry up. I have left a dead buffalo in the field.”

The tigress with her three cubs rushed to the spot and found that a huge buffalo was really lying dead. Four of them with great effort dragged him along and thought, “Ah! Majantali must be very very strong.”

Another day they said to Majantali, “Mr. Majantali, there are big elephants and rhinos in this forest. Let us go and hunt them down.” Hearing this Majantali said, “That’s it! What else should I kill than elephants and rhinos? Let’s go today.”

At once he went with all of them to kill elephants and rhinos. While going the tigress asked him, "Where will you stay—in hiding or in chasing?" "In hiding" means to crouch quietly in order to kill the prey when it comes. 'In chasing' means to run about in the forest and chase the animals. Majantali thought, "Which animal will be frightened if I chase one?" So he said, "Faugh ! Will you be able to kill the animals I chase and send to you? You go and chase them; I'll be in hiding ready to spring upon them! The tigress said, "What you say is correct. It's doubtful whether we shall be able to kill those fierce animals. Come, my sons, let us go in chasing."

Saying this the tigress went with her cubs to the other side of the forest and began to chase the animals, roaring violently, "H-a-u-m—H-a-u-m." Hearing the shouts of the animals Majantali sat down under a tree and shook with fear.

After a while a porcupine came running there. Seeing the porcupine Majantali hid himself under the root of that tree with the words. "Oh, my darling mother!" Just at that moment an elephant passed by. He trampled that very root with one side of his foot. As a result Majantali's belly burst and he was on the verge of death.

Running about for a long time the tigress and her cubs thought, "A lot of animals must have been killed by Mr. Majantali by this time! Come, let's go and see him." When they found him in such a pitious state they said, "Alas, what a miserable state he is in!" Majantali said, "What to do? You sent such teeny-weeny animals that I couldn't help laughing. I laughed and laughed and laughed and that's why my belly has burst." Saying this he met his death.

THE ANT, THE ELEPHANT AND THE BRAHMIN'S SERVANT

THERE was an ant-couple. They were on very good terms with each other. One day the she-ant said, "Look here, darling, if I die before you then immerse my dead body in the Ganges. Wouldn't you, dear?" The ant said, "Yes, that I'll surely do, my dear. But if I die before you then you will have to do the same. Wouldn't you?" The wife said, "Of course, I will; you needn't have to say that." They thus resolved between themselves.



One day the she-ant breathed her last. The male ant sobbed for a long while, then thought, "Now I shall have to lay her body in the Ganges." So he carried her on his shoulder and trudged along the whole day. At the close of the day he saw

that he had arrived at the place where all the king's elephants lived. The ant was dead-beat so he stopped there to take some rest. There a huge elephant was tied up. He was the leader of all the elephants. He was stirring his trunk and breathing heavily. The ant along with the body of his wife was blown away by the breathing of that elephant. So the ant got terribly angry and shouted out, "Beware!" But the elephant could not hear it. He again breathed and the ant was again blown away. Being angrier, he shouted at the top of his voice, "Hey! Be careful! It will do you no good, you scoundrel !"

The elephant thought, "Well! Well! Well! Who is abusing me in a squeaking voice? I can't see any one." Saying this, he rubbed the floor of that particular place with his foot. The ant was in great danger. He thought, "Oh, lord! I shall be crushed under his foot." Then he saw that he had not been trampled. He had found shelter in one of the holes under the feet of the elephant and he had not loosened his grasp on the she-ant. Then his joy knew no bounds. He settled himself inside the hole and scooped out the flesh of the elephant's foot. He went on scooping until he entered into the elephant's head with the she-ant.

As a result of this, the elephant became seriously ill. He moved his head this way and that, shouted and ran about restlessly. Everybody said, "Alas! What's wrong with the elephant?" None of them knew that an ant had made his way into the elephant's head. Had they known that they would have smeared the elephants feet with sugar so that the ant being attracted by the smell of sugar would have come out. But they were completely in the dark. They called in a doctor, applied medicine and that brought about the death of the elephant. That very night the elephant appeared before the king in his dream and said, "Your Majesty! I worked hard for you all my life. Be pleased to throw me into the water of the Ganges."

The king woke up in the morning and issued an order, "Go and throw my elephant into the water of the Ganges." Immediately three hundred people tied a thick rope on the elephant's feet and dragged him towards the Ganges, "Heigh-ho, heigh-ho!" It was a huge elephant; to pull him along was a tough job indeed! Going a short distance with him they released the rope and sat down and panted for breath.

It so happened that a Brahmin was passing along that road with his servant. When the servant saw the people breathing hard he said, "Look at them! Dragging along that elephant three hundred people are panting for breath. I can take it all by myself."

Hearing this those three hundred people jumped up. They said, "What audacity! Can you do all by yourself what we three hundred people can't do? Very well, we refuse to drag the animal unless justice is done. Come on, you rescal, let's go to the king and see how strong you are." The servant said, "Let's go at once."

Then all of them left the elephant in the field and went to the king. "In the name of goodness, Your Majesty, please do justice." They said, "Dragging your elephant we, three hundred people, are gasping for breath and now this rascal comes and says that he can carry it all by himself. Until justice is done we will not touch your elephant." Hearing this the king said to the Brahmin's servant, "What's this I hear? Can you really drag this elephant all alone?" The servant said, "If Your Majesty commands, I can surely do it. But before that I must have a full square meal." The king said, "Give him one seer of rice, lentil soup and vegetables. Let him have his fill, then he will have to drag the elephant." The servant laughed and said, "Your Majesty, lesser mortals feed on a seer of rice. Can one pull an elephant with such meagre meal?" The king said, "Then what do you want?" The servant said, "Nothing much, Your Majesty, only two maunds of rice, two goats and one maund of curd will do." The king said, "You will get it but you will have to eat the entire amount." The servant said, "As you command, Your Majesty."



The Brahmin's servant had his fill with two maunds of boiled rice, two goats and a maund of curd and then he enjoyed a sound sleep. Then he tied up the elephant in his towel, hung it up at the end of his stick and supported the bundle on his shoulder. He thrust about two scores of betel-leaves into his mouth and proceeded towards the Ganges while singing. The King and his three hundred men watched him with gaping mouths and everybody else ran home to deliver the news.

By that time the servant had gone a long way under the scorching rays of the sun. The servant went farther and then said, "Oh-h! The sun is very hot, my throat is parched. Now I would like to drink water !"

While saying this, he saw that there was a pond ahead. By the side of the pond there was a hut behind the cluster of trees. The servant placed the bundle by the side of the pond, went near the hut and saw a little girl sitting there. He said to the girl, "Dearie, I am very thirsty. Would you please give me water to drink?" The girl said, "There is only one drum of water left. If I give it to you then what will father drink when he returns?" Hearing this the servant flared up and said, What insolence! Won't you give me some water to drink! Well, I'll see where you get water after this." Saying this he came by the side of the pond and drank all the water of the pond at a draught. As long as there was water in the pond, nothing but a hissing sound could be heard. The water was all consumed in a trice. As he was drinking his belly went on swelling and became like a drum at first, then like an elephant and at last it resembled a mountain. Consuming all the water of the pond the servant felt that the water would in no way remain within his belly. Then what was he to do? He promptly swallowed a banyan tree. The tree went to the middle of his throat and acted as a stopper—the water could not come out.

Then the Brahmin's servant was very pleased with himself and lay down by the side of the pond to take rest. His belly rose as high as a palm tree, it looked like a mountain. The girl's father had been working in the field at that time. He noticed from a distance the belly that looked like a mountain and thought, "Good gracious! What is it, I wonder?" He lost no time in returning home.

As soon as he came home his daughter said, "Father, oh father! How wicked that man is! He wanted water from me. There was only one drum of water. What would you drink if I gave it to him? So I refused, and look! He had drunk all the water of our pond." While saying this both of them came near the servant. The girl twisting her nose said, "Oh, my! What a bad smell! See, father, he has tied up in his bundle something like a dead rat." With one hand she covered her nose with her cloth and with only two fingers of the other hand she threw away the bundle containing the elephant. The bundle fell far into the Ganges.

In the meantime her father gave another show. He tied the cloth round his waist lightly, puckered his features and gave a smart kick at the servant's belly.

What a terrible kick it was ! Because of that kick all the water in his belly came out with the cork-like banyan tree and swept away all the huts and their belongings, the girl and all other things. The only persons left were the girl's father and the Brahmin's servant. Then the two of them went on embracing each other.

After the affectionate embrace was over the girl's father said, "Bravo, brother! I haven't in my life seen a man stronger than you. You drank up all the water of the pond, isn't it fantastic?" The Brahmin's servant said, "Oh, brother! I, too, haven't seen a stronger man than you. You have unburdened my belly only with one kick, isn't it wonderful?" Then they began to argue on this point. One said, "You are stronger than me." The other said, "you are stranger than me." Now who would decide whose statement was true? After bandying words with each other for some time they came to a decision, "Come, let's go to a big market-place and engage ourselves in wrestling, then it will be proved who is stronger."

So as they were going to the market-place to wrestle they met a fisher-woman on the way. She was going with fish in her basket to sell it in the market. Seeing them she said, "Hullo! Where are you going?" They said, "We are going to the market to wrestle with each other." Hearing this the fisher-woman said, "The market-place is far off, sons, why should you take the trouble of going there on foot? You better step into my basket and start wrestling. While you are wrestling if the basket gets tilted on one side then I shall know that the person who is on that side is the defeated one." They said, "Excellent proposal! We shall have our wrestling and we shan't have to walk. Saying this they stepped into her basket and started wrestling and the fisher-woman went towards the market-place with the basket on her head.

At that time one interesting thing happened. There was a vicious kite in that land. He would swallow cows, buffaloes, elephants, horses — anything that he could get hold of. But he could be restrained to some extent only by the fisher-woman. The moment he touched the fisher-woman's basket she showered upon him such torrents of abusive language that the kite had to escape. For this his temper rose high and he thought that he would one day surely seize the basket from the fisher-woman at any cost.

That day the kite as usual went out in search of food. The hissing sound of his wings could be heard from a distance. A herdsman had come with seven hundred buffaloes to graze in the field. He heard that sound and thought, "Ah, me ! That kite is coming. He will eat up all my buffaloes. Now what should I do?" With this thought in his mind the herdsman tucked those seven hundred buffaloes in the folds of his cloth round his waist and ran at full speed towards his house. The people in his house said, "What's up? Why are you in such a hurry?" He said, "Shouldn't I make haste? That kite is coming, won't he eat up all my buffaloes?"

He said, "Just see" and unfolding the cloths in his waist he brought out the seven hundred buffaloes. They were highly pleased and said, "How lucky! You had folded them up in your waist-band! If you hadn't, all the buffaloes would have been eaten up.

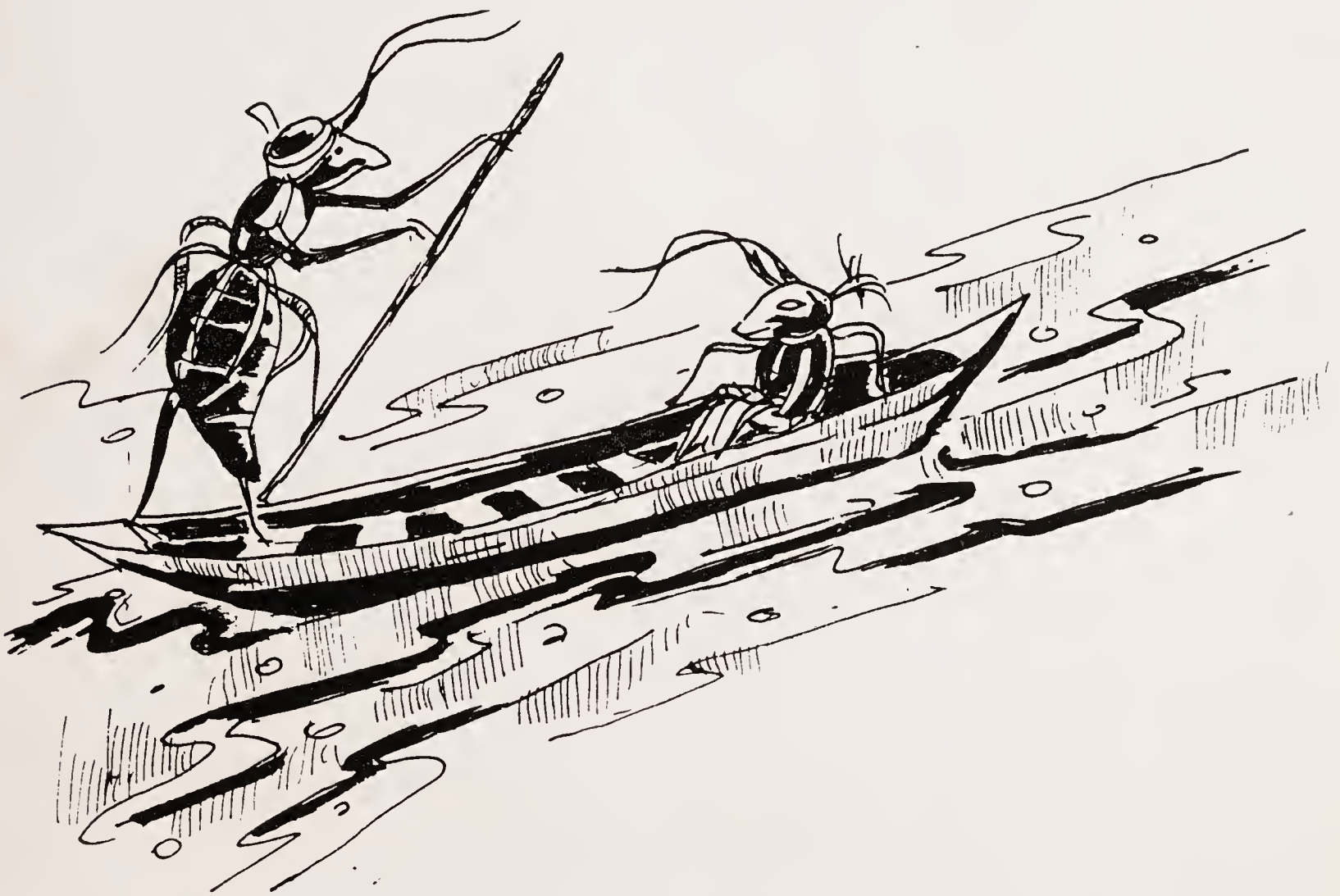
The kite had gone out in search of food and he noticed two wrestlers wrestling in the fisher-woman's basket. The fisher-woman was only thinking about them. She didn't have the kite in her mind. Just at that moment the kite saw her, swooped upon her basket and ran off with it.

The princess of that country was then sitting on the roof. Her maid was combing her hair. The princess was looking up at the sky, just then something fell into her eyes. She shut her eyes and said, "Oh, maid! Just see what has fallen into my eyes." The maid twisted the end of her cloth, wetted it with her sputum and with the help of that she brought out a small beautiful object from the eyes of the princess. The princess said, "Ah! How beautiful! Maid, what is it?" It was shown to all the people in the house but nobody could say what it was.

The king came, the ministers came, but they failed to understand. Then the king summoned the distinguished scholars. They had instruments with which an ant looked like an elephant. They looked through that instrument and said, "All that we see is a basket, there are some fishes in that basket and two men are wrestling with each other."

THE ANT AND HIS WIFE

THERE were a he-ant a she-ant. The she-ant said, "Darling, I'll go to my father's place, bring me a boat." The he-ant brought a nice husk of rice floating in the water. The she-ant saw it and said, "What a lovely boat ! Come on, dear, take me to my father's place." Both of them got into the boat and the boat started floating. Going a short distance the boat got caught in a shoal. Then the he-ant said,



"Dearie, I'll give a push, you'll give a push.
My story ends in the thickness of the bush."

This book for children consists of 27 stories. Each story revolves around either a bird or an animal. Men and women if at all, are playing minor roles. The author has given voice to the birds and animals, making the stories lively and entertaining.

The stories, originally written in Bengali by the popular writer Upendrakishore Raychowdhury, have been translated into English by Chameli Bose.



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